MANIMEKALAI

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Translated by

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FOREWORD

Manimekalai and *Cilappatikaram* are considered by many as twin-epics as they are very much related to each other. Both of them belong to the same age and deal with the story of the same family. While *Cilappatikaram* is the story of *Kannaki*, *Manimekalai* is that of *Manimekalai*, the daughter of *Kovalan* (the husband of *Kannaki)* through *Madhavi*, the dancing woman. It is also said that the authors of both the epics *Ilango* and *Sethalai Sathanar* have mutually agreed to write the respective work with the blessings of each other. It is said that though the two epics, between themselves, clearly expound the four *purusharttas*, the first three of them, namely, Virtue *(aram)*, Wealth *(porul)* and Love *(inpam)* are clearly delineated by *Cilappatikaram*, and the last of them, namely Bliss of Release *(Vidu)* by *Manimekalai*.

This is also the story of a woman, a woman of not only of great chastity but also a woman who is very much concerned with the poor and hungry. *Manimekalai's* inner struggles between her passionate love for the prince who was her husband in the previous birth and her ardent desire for spiritual service are picturesquely described by the poet. Finally her desire for serving mankind triumphs and with the help of the magic bowl she is able to appease the hunger of the poor, the have-nots, the needy and the criminals alike. The prison house turns into the "House of *Dharma*".

Sethalai Sathanar is one of the brilliant poets of Tamilnadu who is known for his powerful images, poetic beauty and truth, musical diction, moving words, passionate and powerful phrases, sentiments and feelings, and above all for his unabated leanings towards *Buddhism*. If *Cilappatikaram* is credited for its well-balanced treatment of religious tenets and canons, *Manimekalai* is known for its *Buddhist* propaganda, depiction of supernatural trends, of numerous allusions to *Buddhist* mythology and philosophy, its contempt for the tenets and the followers of other religions, especially of Jainism. At the same time it does not fail to impress upon the readers certain important human values like the glory of chastity, the justice of the king, the

feeding of the hungry, the helping of the poor, service to the needy, the importance of *Dharma*, faith in traditional values and culture and respect for elders etc.

As it is very often said, *Manimekalai* is a precious jewel of Tamil literature and its impact and influence go a long way giving rise to a new development in Tamil literature bringing intellectual debates, philosophical and religious tenets and canons into literary works and thereby giving literary grandeur to them. Literature, it seems, is not only "criticism of life" but also a powerful medium for propagation of one's ideals and ideology.

The Tamil University has recently launched an ambitious project, **Translation Of Tamil Classics Into English** and I am very happy to say that within a short span of time several works have been taken up.

Classics like,

1. Cilappatikaram
2. Manimekalai
3. Bharathiyar Songs
4. Tirukkovaiyar

have been completed and the following are in progress:

5. Akananuru
6. Purananuru
7. Periyapuranam and
8. Kalittokai

I am sure that these translations will be of great use to understand the poetic tradition of Indian Literature in general and Tamil Literature in particular.

20-10-1989,
Thanjavur.

- Dr. S. Agesthialingom,
Vice-Chancellor.

PREFACE

It was nearly ten years ago that the renowned historian and Tagore scholar, Professor Niharranjan Ray, suggested that I should translate the Tamil epic *Manimekalai* into English. It seemed an impossible task, but my father encouraged me to accept the challenge. Since then, my parents, Prof. K.R.Srinivasa Iyengar and Srimati Padmasani, have given me constant support in this absorbing if difficult work. To them, my loving gratitude.

I have followed Dr. U.V.Swaminatha Iyer's incomparable edition of *Manimekalai* throughout. In a few places, the commentary of Sri P.V.Somasundaranar has also been of significant help.

As for the translation, certainly it is not the pure gold of *Sathanar*. Indeed, no translation can ever project perfectly the sweetness and sublimity of *Sathanar*. My best hope is that this translation will bring the English reader unacquainted with Tamil a little closer to the great epic, *Manimekalai*.

Blank verse was a natural choice to translate a poem composed in Tamil *asiriyappa*. It also helped me to be literal, even if sometimes it had to be at the expense of poetic beauty. As for the notes, I have included only the minimum of explanatory information that the reader would need to understand the poem.

I am grateful to Sri. T.N.Ramachandran, Prof. S.N.Kandaswamy and Prof. K.G.Seshadri for going through the translation and helping me to come face to face with my own inadequacies. If, in spite of our collective effort, any errors have crept in, I can only blame myself and crave the scholar-reader's forgiveness.

My heartfelt thanks are due to Prof. S.Agesthialingom, Vice-Chancellor, Tamil University, for including my work in the University's ambitious programme of publishing the classics of Tamil in English. I should also like to thank Dr. P.Chinnian, Registrar, Tamil University for his unfailing courtesy and help facilitating the publication of this translation.

To my husband, M.S.Nandakumar, I owe thanks as always for his patience and understanding during this adventure of translation that, however, tossed me at times into depths of depression.

For myself, living in the *Manimekalai* universe has been an enriching askesis paralleled only by those years of my doctoral and post-doctoral research when I was half-lost in Sri Aurobindo's mystic and symbolistic epic in English, *Savitri*. When I took up *Manimekalai* for translation, I began as a novice, but the glorious world of ancient Tamil literature soon held me in thrall. With the infallible guidance of Dr. U.V.Swaminatha Iyer to help me, I gained the needed self-confidence as the work progressed. Indeed, his name has been my sustaining talisman while I was engaged in this English translation.

Today I understand, even more than I did 30 years ago when I was launched on my *Savitri* studies, the significance of Sri Aurobindo's words in his Thoughts and Aphorisms: "If thy aim be great and thy means small, still act; for by action alone these can increase to thee." How else can I explain this completed *Manimekalai* in Enlgish verse?

Savitri, Manimekalai. I conclude by once again bowing in reverence to Sri Aurobindo and *Sathanar* for having enabled us to recognise the Sufferance and Compassion, Power and Grace that are the quadruple glory of heroic Indian womanhood.

20-05-1989, — **Dr. Prema Nandakumar.**
Srirangam.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Tamil Epics

After the lyric brilliance of the Sangham Age and ethical puritanism of the *Kural* ambience, the Epic Age was ushered in Tamil Nadu by the Jains with the translation of Gunatya's *Brihat Katha* as *Perunkathai* by *Konguvel*. Much of this early epic literature like *Vasudevanar Sindam* and *Vimbisara Kathai* are now lost.

Tradition speaks of the Five Great Epics -- *Aim Perum Kappiyangal* -- of which the first to be written was, perhaps, *Manimekalai*. It is said that the author, *Sethalai Sathanar*, was a friend of *Ilango Adigal* and recounted to him the history of *Manimekalai's* parent which prompted *Ilango* to exclaim:

"These are great thoughts: those who forget *Dharma*,
To them *Dharma* becomes destructive *Yama*.
Great men hailing a lady of immense chastity;
The sins of the past taking revenge in the present;
Here was destiny fulfilled through an anklet.
Come! Let us compose an epic on this subject."[1]

Sathanar felt that *Ilango* himself was the right person for the task which involved the three royal houses of *Cheras*, *Cholas* and *Pandyas*. Thus it came to pass that Prince *Ilango*, a scion of the *Cheras* became the author of *Silappadhikaram* in which a couple from the *Chola* country came to a tragic end in *Pandyan* city. *Manimekalai* and *Silappadhikaram* are generally known as the twin epics.

The date of the epic *Silappadhikaram* has not yet been settled. Two generally held beliefs give the date as the Second century A.D. or the Ninth century A.D. The same vast divergence in dating appears for *Manimekalai* also. It is in any case clear enough that the two epics were composed not long after the Sangham period.

Silappadhikaram's story is easily told. Having lost his riches to the courtesan *Madhavi*, the merchant *Kovalan* along with his wife *Kannaki* leaves *Pukar*, the *Chola* capital, for *Maturai*. *Kovalan* is beheaded in the *Pandyan* city on suspicion of having stolen an anklet belonging to the Queen. Realising the enormity of the injustice, the King and the Queen embrace instant death. The chaste *Kannaki* burns up *Maturai* in her anger, retires to *Vanji* and rejoins her husband in the realms beyond. The *Chera* King, *Senguttuvan*, institutes *Kannaki* worship by installing in a temple the image of the chaste lady carved out of a holy rock brought from the Himalayas.

Manimekalai takes up the story of *Kovalan's* daughter by *Madhavi*. *Manimekalai*, though endowed with a rare loveliness of figure and accomplished in the Fine Arts rejects the love of the *Chola* Prince *Udayakumaran* and enters a *Buddhist* nunnery. Entwined with several digressions, the epic is overtly a *Buddhist* work, written to enshrine *Buddhist* philosophy.

The third of the 'five great epics' to survive is *Jeevaka Chintamani*. Composed by *Thiruthakka Dhevar*, the epic theme is derived from existing legends scattered in Sanskrit Jain works like *Kshatra Choodamani* and *Gadya Chintamani*. Prince *Jeevakan's* martial exploits and romantic escapades conclude with his being crowned. After a long reign, he gives up his crown in the time-honoured manner of Jain renunciates and engages himself in austerities leading to salvation.

The remaining two epics have not been traced so far. Of these, *Valayapati* was no doubt a Jain *kavya* as indicated by the verses quoted by latter-day critics. *Kundalakesi* was a *Buddhist* epic written by *Nathagupta*. The *vaisya* maid *Kundalakesi* marries the gambler *Kalan*. Later on, he tries to murder her. She boldly devises a strategem, kills him and becomes an ascetic far-famed for her thorough knowledge of *Buddhist* philosophy.

2. Author of *Manimekalai*

Maturai Koolavanihan Sathanar, author of *Manimekalai* was a Buddhist grain merchant and probably hailed from a village named *Seethalai*. Scholars are still debating over the exact date but there is little doubt about his having lived after 2nd century A.D. Though *Sathanar's* name is cited as the Sangham poet who wrote verses for *Natrinai* (3), *Ahananooru* (5), *Purananooru* (1) and *Kuruntogai* (1) as well as a verse for *Tiruvalluvamalai*, the generally held belief is that the author of the epic *Manimekalai* was a different person. In fact, the late Prof. S.Vaiyapuri Pillai assigns him to 8th-9th centuries. However, V.Kanakasabhai in his scholarly book, *The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* prefers 3rd century A.D. as does Prof. Tirunarayana Iyengar. Researchers of today like N.Balusamy and T.N.Vasudeva Rao also hold on to this dating, chiefly because there is no mention of the *Pallavas* in the epic; and *Pallavas* were a powerful royalty in *Kanchi* since 3rd century A.D.

But Dr.Kandaswamy would take us to 5th century. Among the crucial points mentioned in this connection is that the philosophical exposition of *Buddhism* in the epic follows *Dignaga* and *Dignaga* belongs to the 5th century A.D. Dr. Kandaswamy also points out that *Sathanar's* accounts of *Buddhist* merchants were inspired by *Buddhaghosha's* commentaries on the *Jatakas* and the *Dhammapada*. The stories of *Saduvan, Kisa Gowthami* and *Madhavi* have their origin in *Buddhaghosha*. *Buddhaghosha* was a contemporary of *Dignaga*. Another link is *Dhammapala*, a native of *Kanchi* and a classmate of *Buddhaghosha*.

> "*Dhammapala* and *Sathanar* might have known each other and perhaps were good friends. Prof. Kuppuswamy Sastrigal opines that *Aravana Adigal* of *Manimekalai* and *Dhammapala* are one and the same person. *Dhammapala*, who served in the *Nalanda* University, describes an earthquake. which shook *Anga Natu*, the country, where he lived. *Aravanar* stayed at *Kanchi* and instructed *Manimekalai* in *Buddhist* logic and philosophy. It is quite suggestive of the fact that *Dhammapala* was a native of *Kanchi*. *Dhammapala* travelled far and wide in India. In the same manner *Aravanar* undertook a tour of *Pukar, Ceylon, Maturai, vanci, Kanci,* and *Anga Natu*."[2]

As far as we are concerned, *Manimekalai* is the reality. And the epic gives ample proof that the author was a profound scholar and a sublime poet. It was after all, no easy task to project the character of *Manimekalai* as a poised flame of aspiration amidst a welter of criss-crossing sub-plots and tame the Tamil language to utter in crystalline terms the intricacies of Indian religious and philosophical systems in general and *Buddhism* in particular.

Sathanar was a friend of *Ilango Adigal*, author of *Silappadhikaram*. The two poets were mutually inspired to take to epic poesy. As a result. we have gained unimpeachable social documentation of the lives of Tamils 2000 years ago. *Sathanar's* descriptions of cities like *Kaveri-p-poompattinam*, *Varji* and *Kanchi* make it obvious that he had personally known them.

Sathanar must have been indeed an image of compassion as is made clear by the epic. *Karuna*, the quality most associated with *Buddha*, is the presiding mood of *Manimekalai*. *Sathanar's* glorification of *karuna* remains superbly alive in the image of his heroine, *Manimekalai*.

Sathanar's enviable command over the Tamil language lifts the epic to the realms of a spiritual testament. A well-read scholar, he is fond of nature descriptions. The Palace garden, for example:

> 'Our King enjoyed the flower garden
> Where the beetles on the branches fluted,
> The bees sounded like the strings of a lute,
> The nightingales sang and the peacocks danced.

In a corner with a swan sans its mate
Danced a peacock and its hen in rhythm
Going round and round, their large wings unfurled;
The gracious King watched the sight with pleasure,
As if it were the dance of Lord *Krishna*
With his elder brother and *Nappinnai*.
The sight of a spangled peacock
Close to a mango near a flower
Appeared as though a lovely maid was feeding
A parrot with milk from a golden plate.
He laughed to see a male monkey swinging
Its mate seated on the bejewelled swing
Specially erected for lovely girls
Within the garden full of flowering trees."[3]

It is sheer pleasure to read most of *Manimekalai*. This makes us forget that it was conceived as a poem for religious instruction. The epic satisfies the Johnsonian dictum: "the end of writing is to instruct; the end of poetry is to instruct by pleasing."

3. The Epic

Though the source of *Manimekalai* has not been traced so far, it is clear that it is in the tradition of *Bodhisattva* tales belonging to *Buddhist* scriptural lore. Prof. S. Vaiyapuri Pillai opines that the reference in the twenty-first canto about *Manimekalai's* future births would point out to an *avatana* that details the past births of either *Sariputta* or *Moggalana* who were the chief disciples of the *Buddha*. In keeping with *Buddhist* mythology, the theme of *Manimekalai* is built upon a series of miracles.

4758 lines of *ahavarpa* (blank verse) divided into thirty cantos make up the text of *Manimekalai*. Though the epic is a poem doubled with philosophy, philosophy does not intrude upon the narrative in a heavy way. *Sathanar* has set aside three cantos exclusively for this purpose. 'Listening to the Philosophers' details the various systems of philosophy then prevalent in India: *Vaidika* system, *Ajivaka*, *Nirgrantha*, *Sankhya*, *Vaiseshika* and *Bhuta Vadas* as well as *Buddhism*. The last two cantos, '*Manimekalai* Receives the *Dharma*' and 'The Maiden's Askesis to Overcome Mortal Birth' take us to the subtler points of *Buddhist* philosophy. For the rest, it is a pure narrative on which the wings of *Buddha's* compassion brood, animating the characters in various ways. Hence it is poetic imagination that sits enthrored in *Manimekalai*; the strong, buoyant, simile-studded, stately and superior epic imagination that rings with the universal theme of *Buddha's Karuna*.

The main story is simply told. *Manimekalai*, the accomplished and beautiful daughter of the courtesan *Madhavi* and *Kovalan*, is brought up in the tenets of *Buddhism* by her mother. She has a natural leaning towards renun-

ciation and the performance of charitable works. She is loved by *Udayakumaran*, the *Chola* Prince who pursues her with determination. She is helped by her family deity to go to the island of *Manipallavam* where the Lotus Seat of the *Buddha* reveals to her all about her past births. On understanding the truth about the soul-wearying chain of birth and death, *Manimekalai* resolves to stay firm in the path of renunciation. To help her in this *sadhana*, Goddess *Manimekalai* teaches her three chants that would enable her to take the form she wished, overcome hunger and fly in the air. The guardian angel of the island, *Dipatilakai*, guides *Manimekalai* to the nectar-vessel, *Amuda Surabhi*. With this magic vessel that can produce a limitless quantity of food, *Manimekalai* returns to her native place and engages herself in feeding the poor and the needy. Her charitable disposition pleases the King who allows her to convert the prison in the capital into a House of Charity.

Prince *Udayakumaran* hears of *Manimekalai's* activities in the Town Hall and pursues her there. To escape from his unwelcome attentions, *Manimekalai* puts on the form of a *Vidhyadhara* maid, *Kayachantikai*. Unfortunately, *Kayachantikai's* lover *Kanchanan* comes upon the scene. Angered by the Prince forcing himself into the presence of *Manimekalai* (whom *Kanchanan* takes for his beloved *Kayachantikai*), he kills the Prince. The King imprisons *Manimekalai* suspecting her complicity in the murder, but later releases her. The Queen takes *Manimekalai* to her palace and tortures her in various ways. But the chants help *Manimekalai* overcome the evil intentions of the Queen. The Queen is transformed too after listening to *Manimekalai's* words of wisdom about the chains of births that keeps human beings in thrall:

"From which place did you lament for the Prince?
O gentle woman! You have done wrong.
Did you cry for the body? Or for life?
If it was for the body, who were they
Who burnt him at the crematorium?
If it was for the life, you cannot know
Where it is reborn following its past deeds.
If you have loved the life, then must you love
Every living thing, O gracious lady!"[4]

With the Queen's permission, *Manimekalai* goes to *Nagapuram* and meets King *Punyarajan* who had been *Aaputhran* in an earlier life. She takes him to *Manipallavam* and helps him gain wisdom by saluting the Seat of the *Buddha*. She then proceeds to *Vanji* and worships the images of *Kannaki* and *Kovalan*. *Kannaki* appears before her and reveals the future turn of events. At *Vanji*, *Manimekalai* puts on the robe of an ascetic and meets logicians, philosophers and practitioners of different religions to learn about the foundations of Indian culture. She is not satisfied by any of the philo-

sophies except *Buddhism*. Hence she goes to *Kanchi* and is taught the tenets of *Buddhism* by her preceptor, Sage *Aravana*. After she absorbs all the relevant parts of *Buddhism*, Sage *Aravana* gives her initiation as a nun of the *Buddhist* Order. *Manimekalai* then engages herself in life-long meditation and charitable works to spread the message of the *Buddha* who was compassion incarnate.

As we proceed with the story of *Manimekalai*, we are also drawn into various sub-plots. The most important of them is the life history of *Aaputhran* who had been born out of wedlock to the Brahmin housewife, *Sali*. He leads an exemplary life of compassion and helps the weaker sections of the society. Pleased with him, Goddess *Chintadevi* gives him an *Amudha Surabhi*. *Aaputhran's* charity and fame invoke the wrath of *Indra*. Forced to flee the land of his birth, *Aaputhran* is left alone on the island of *Manipallavam*. He leaves the vessel in the *Gomukhi* lake and embraces a voluntary death. It is this vessel that is given to *Manimekalai* later on.

There are also other stories relating to the abandoned maid *Sutamati*, the chaste wife *Aadirai*, and the ideal lovers *Dharmadatta* and *Visakai*. There is never a dull moment in the epic and though these tales are independent by themselves, they have been woven in the main narrative with natural ease. This is possible because the narrative is in graceful and limpid Tamil which has earned for the author the sobriquet: *tan-Tamil Sathan: Sathanar* who writes in pleasing Tamil. There are no irruptions of high-toned conversations nor deliberate attempts at sublime oratory. A steady flow of the *asiriyappa* with each line almost complete by itself most of the time gives it an *Upanishadic* movement. The epic was no doubt meant for recitation at gatherings of the faithful to expatiate on the glory of renunciation and underline virtues like charity and compassion. Probably the first long poem in Tamil after the Sangham Age of lyricism, *Manimekalai's* style has received uniform praise. Says Mayilai Seeni Venkataswamy:

> "*Manimekalai* has several unique points. This epic which has lovely word-embroidery and depth of thought, is not a mere literary work. It is of great use to understand the history, arts and culture of ancient Tamils as well as the religions and traditions of that time in fact, *Manimekalai* is a jewel that adorns Mother Tamil with its incandescent loveliness."[5]

Dr. U.V.Swaminatha Iyer has pointed out how, inspite of being an ardent *Saivite*, he could not stop the flow of tears when he first chanced upon the four lines spoken by Sage *Aravana* in the epic:

"Those who are born are bound to sorrow.
Those who escape birth gain eternal joy.
Attachment leads to the former; the latter
Is the gain of the non-attached."[6]

A characteristic passage made up of single self-contained lines may be found in *Sutamati's* speech to *Udayakumaran* on the vanity of human wishes and the impermanence of the human body:

"This body is caused by previous deeds.
It is a field for further *karma;* and
Sans decor, mere meat to be cast off.
Subject to age; receptacle of ills.
Cause of desire; container of misdeeds;
A pit that hides the snake known as anger;
Within it is the heart tossed by sorrow,
Fear, helplessness and an endless pain.
Knowing thus, look close at the inner truth."[7]

There are lovely descriptions of gardens in cities like *Vanji, Kanchi, Savakam, Manipallavam* and *Kaveri-p-poompattinam,* truly a delight for the environmentalists. A variety of dramatic scenes involving the flora and fauna in the gardens give the epic an ever-green shimmer. And epic similes assure *Manimekalai* a noble verbal gait. The royal elephant in rut is likened to a ship tossed about in a storm on the high seas:

"Like a ship whose captain is in deep fright,
Its mast broken, the knots of sail loosened
And hang awry, its deck splintered all over,
The torn sail swishing, it tosses helpless
All over the sea with no sense of course
Caught as it is in a grim tornado,
The royal elephant *Kalavegan*
Was in rut, the attendants were helpless,
The mahout nowhere; it detersed the blood
That flowed from a facial wound, and traversed
Like a blue mountain walking on the earth,
The King's Way the main road, the shopping street,
Spreading confusion in *Pukar* city
All over its twin divisions of land,
Not keeping to a course, nor taking rest,
As the keeper, the drummer, birds of prey
And helpless citizens set up a din."[8]

High among the virtues advocated by *Manimekalai* is feeding the hungry. Saving a living being from the pangs of hunger is considered a tapas and *Manimekalai* is referred to by such sobriquets as the Doctor of Dear Life *(Aruyir Maruthuvi)* and the Maid Who Ended the Disease of Hunger *(Pasippini Teertha Pavai).* With *Aaputhran* and *Manimekalai* as exemplars, *Sathanar* makes use of every chance to underline this virtue. Thus *Dipatilakai* to *Manimekalai* when the latter receives the *Amuda Surabhi* and takes to a life of charity:

"Charity to people who can pay back
Is mere trade: the lives of only those
Who save the helpless from hunger, are blessed.
They who give nourishment to living beings
In this world, give precious life itself.
You have taken the vow of saving lives.
Surely a peerless *dharmic* path!"[9]

Manimekalai also praises other important virtues like chastity and compassion through the re-telling of the life-histories of *Aadirai* and *Sutamati*. Animal sacrifice is frowned at through the story of *Aaputhran*. The *Buddhist* ideals of non-violence, equality and renunciation are stressed at the appropriate places.

The epic is really a treasure-trove for historians and sociologists for its action takes place in all the major divisions of Tamil Nadu: *Chola (Pukar)*, *Chera (Vanji)* and *Pandya (Maturai)* as also in *Kanchi*, a vice-royalty of the *Cholas*. Scholars like V.Kanakasabhai, U.V.Swaminatha Iyer, S.Krishnaswamy Iyengar and Mu.Raghava Iyengar have admirably reconstructed the political and social life of the ancient Tamils with the help of this epic. Heavy dependence upon *Manimekalai* by historians may be seen in passages such as this that connects India and Sri Lanka:

> "Ceylon was known as *Lankadvipa* or *Ratna-dvipa:* the highest mountain in the island was *Samanoli* (Now called Adam's peak); and on its summit was an impression of *Buddha's* foot, which was an object of pilgrimage to *Buddhists* far and near. Between Ceylon and India was the island *Manipallavam*, on which there was one of the sacred seats of *Buddha*, then held in great veneration by all *Buddhists*. It is said to have been at a distance of thirty *yojanas* south of *Pukar*, the ancient sea-port at the mouth of the *Kaveri*. A ship sailing from the coast of *Matura* to *Chavakam* (Java) touched at *Manipallavam*. To the east of Ceylon were the islands inhabited by a race of *Nagas* called *Nakkasaranar* or naked *Nomadas*, who were cannibals. Beyond these island was *Chavakam*, a large kingdom the capital of which was *Nagapuram*. The king of this country claimed to be a descendant of the God *Indra*, and what is most remarkable, the language spoken in *Chavakam* appears to have been Tamil! This *Chavakam* was most probably Sumatra or Java."[10]

It will be seen that almost the entire matter has been woven out of the information contained in the Tamil epic.

Manimekalai occupies a very high place in Tamil literature. It exhibits a purposive imagination, poetic exuberance, an appreciation of the sublime, the good and the beautiful, high capability in characterisation, a thorough knowledge of the workings of the human heart (for instance, the contrastive reactions of maternal fondness and paternal sternness when *Udayakumaran's*

death is conveyed to the Queen and the King), and a ready sympathy with the suffering millions. Not a religious tract, but a poem to uphold *Karuna*, the compassion of the *Buddha:*

> Hard it is to understand: By giving away our food, we get more strength, by bestowing cloth on others, we gain more beauty; by founding abodes of purity and truth, we acquire great treasures.
>
> There is a proper time and a proper mode in charity; just as the vigorous warrior goes to battle, so is the man who is able to give. He is like an able warrior, a champion strong and wise in action.
>
> Loving and compassionate he gives with reverence and banishes all hatred, envy, and anger."[11]

4. The Characters

1. *Manimekalai*

Manimekalai the heroine of the epic, is purity and compassion incarnate. She shines with a rare glow, like a flame of pure light, in Tamil literature. At the very outset of the epic her mother *Madhavi* assures *Vasanthamalai* that her daughter would never become a courtesan. The unnatural death of *Kovalan* had led her to the Sage *Aravana* and the nunnery. She would see to it that *Manimekalai* also renounced the world. *Madhavi's* advice and *Manimekalai's* acceptance of it did not please the citizens of *Pukar*. To cast within the grey portals of a nun's life this embodiment of beauty and artistic excellence! But *Manimekalai* prefers to follow the footsteps of her mother. She has faith in the *Buddhistic* ideal of renunciation and is protected by an unwavering will. As *Sutamati* tells the Prince:

> "Though you are like *Muruga* who destroyed
> The Mountain-ogre, she will not see you;
> Deep is her penance gathered through deeds in
> Previous births: she has power to damn.
> Not for her the lure of carnal desire."[12]

But then, *Manimekalai* is no superhuman being incapable of ordinary emotions. She is very much human. She is a fond daughter, full of spotless, filial affection. While listening to the story of *Kovalan's* murder, tears stain her cheeks. Surely this is not the first time she hears of the tragedy. But the memories are too poignant for the gentle daughter. When she wakes up all alone in the *Manipallavam* island, her prime worry is about her mother. The night is gone. *Madhavi* will worry!

Nor is she a stranger to the stirrings of love in a youthful heart. *Sathanar* sees to it that it is *Manimekalai* and not *Madhavi* who decides about

her renunciation. This is beautifully brought out in the dramatic canto: 'The Manifestaion of Goddess *Manimekala.*" *Manimekalai* is hidden within the crystal room. Outside the room, *Sutamati* speaks to *Udayakumaran* on the vanity of human wishes and the impermanence of the human body. The Prince is vain and insinuates that a courtesan's daughter is easy game. After he speaks this and goes away, *Manimekalai* comes out. Her ears have heard, her heart has been a battlefield, and now she has overcome *Mara's* assault. Her words are dipped in fire, as she recognises her own weakness:

"In words censorious he spoke of me
As unchaste, with no penance, unguarded.
A woman for sale, and would possess me.
Yet my mind followed the stranger's footsteps.
Mother! Is this the nature of desire?
If so, may it be destroyed for ever!"[13]

This is *Manimekalai's* moment of spiritual victory. But *Sathanar* comes back again to this feat of renunciation, perhaps to underline the unique heroism needed of a young, helpless girl to sustain her solemn resolve. *Udayakumaran* lies killed and she gazes upon the body which had in an earlier birth been that of her husband *Rahulan.* Her human feelings come to the fore again, and she laments bitterly that a life of promise has thus been abruptly ended. At this moment of uncertainty, the pillar-statue *(Kandir--p-pavai)* gives her proper guidance. The lingering residue of the ordinary egoistic human consciousness -- *me, for me, my lover* -- is burnt up at last. She now rises, carrying within her the universal *metta bhavana.* She is no more unsure of herself or in doubt about her present and future. This "strength, the silence of the gods" within her helps her to withstand the machinations of the Queen and even effect a complete transformation of the royal heart.

But *Manimekalai* does not withdraw from the field of action. She is no distant, unattainable vision, but a mortal like her fellow beings when she perseveres in her mission. Thanks to her healing touch, prisons and dungeons become places of worship and good works. Even the birds and animals come within the circle of her loving kindness. This is the *Buddhist* ideal of *metta bhavana* that makes one identify oneself with all creation and thereby helps all living things.

"Love *(metta),* Compassion *(karuna),* Sympathetic Joy *(mudita)* and Equanimity *(upekkha)* towards all beings are the four sublime Abodes wherein the monk is admonished constantly to dwell. The fanning of the cold embers and grey ashes of the heart until, by degrees, the coals of affection smouldering beneath are blown first into a fiery blaze, then into a white-hot incandescence of love that radiates far and wide a beneficent spiritual heat, is not only enumerated but also

to be practised first. Without Love, Compassion will turn to contempt, Sympathetic Joy to vicarious satisfaction, and Equanimity to heartless indifference. The texts therefore invariably describe first the cultivation of Love..."[14]

By describing *Manimekalai* as "the maid who cured the disease of hunger," *Sathanar* makes her the ideal image of compassion visualised by all religions. What is compassion? It is simply the inability to remain unconcerned when a fellow-being is suffering from hunger. Indeed, what is the use of our discussions of philosophy, our worship of images and our devotional exercises, if we ignore the hungry poor?

Sathanar has envisioned *Manimekalai* as human like ourselves but divine in her soulful compassion. As we see her through the epic action, we are increasingly drawn to her gentle and meaningful words of wisdom and love to the other characters and also to her humility before elders. Besides, her anxiety to transform the world into a place of calm and contentment reveals the spiritual dimensions in her character and compels our homage.

"All in her pointed to a noble kind.
Near to earth's wideness, intimate with heaven,
Exalted and swift her young large-visioned spirit
Voyaging through worlds of splendour and of calm
Overflow the ways of Thought to unborn things.
Ardent was her self-poised unstumbling will;
Her mind, a sea of white sincerity,
Passionate in flow, had not one turbid wave."[15]

2. *Aaputhran*

Along with *Manimekalai*, *Aaputhran* engages our major attention in the epic. He is a tragic hero who touches the deepest chords of our emotional being. His birth to *Sali* out of wedlock is held up against him when he takes his first step towards service to living beings. If his birth prevented him from putting to practice what he thought was right, his poverty prevented him from doing good works to his heart's satisfaction. However, his single-pointed determination to do charity and his heart's sorrow at being thwarted in his life's mission compelled the admiration of Goddess *Chinta Devi*. She gave him the *Amuda Surabhi*. Thus the divine vessel which is the moving force behind the epic's progression was brought to earth for the first time by *Aaputhran*. He received the priceless gift with humility and dedicated himself whole-heartedly to the task of bringing succour to the needy. His success was overwhelming and a time came when success itself became the cause of his tragedy. When *Indra* comes to *Aaputhran* and offers him boons in the characteristic manner of the gods, *Aaputhran*, for the nonce swayed by self-righteousness, rejects the god's friendly gesture:

"My divine vessel can remove hunger
And bring joy to pain-wracked visages.
What else will the Lord of gods give me --
Food to eat and clothes to wear, or maidens
Or anyone else to guard me safe?"[16]

Indra's reaction makes *Aaputhran* jobless in *Maturai*. Undaunted, he journeys to *Savakam* but is trapped alone in *Manipallavam*. He prefers to die rather than make use of the nectar-vessel to produce food for his consumption. His one-pointed idealism leads to his death in the deserted isle.

Aaputhran is a symbol of pure compassion. *Sathanar* has not brought in any romantic element to disturb the image. *Aaputhran* is made the mouthpiece of some of the most important social criticism in the epic. His growing up into a learned and good person itself proves that birth can never be an impediment to one's acquiring knowledge, and that all men are born equal. The caste distinctions are but man-made. Were not *Vasistha* and *Agastya* born to the courtesan, *Tilottama?* Why, the *Puranas* speak of great saints who have been nurtured by animals!

"*Achala* was a cow's son; *Sringi*, a deer's;
A tiger's offspring, *Virinchi;* was not
Famous *Kesakambala* a jackal's son?
When you give plentiful praise to these saints
As the progenitors of your caste,
Where is stain for the caste traced to a cow,
O beings well read in the *Vedas?"*[17]

Aaputhran's criticism of animal sacrifice is firm, to the point, a gentle lyric of gratitude. How can one have the heart to kill a cow?

"Do not torture others: listen to me.
Grazing in fields set apart from farming
The cow gives sweet and health-increasing milk
With loving kindness to people in this
Wide world from the very day they are born.
What have you against this creature? Tell me,
O brahmins versed in ancient scriptures!"[18]

In line with the Indian tradition, *Aaputhran's* tragedy is transformed into a divine comedy when we meet him in his next birth as the good king *Punyarajan*. This king of *Savaka* is an image of humility and gentleness. He is taken aback and saddened to know of his lowly birth and how he is but a foundling. So strong is his reaction that he even wants to abdicate. However, he is dissuaded by his minister and he also realises the true *Buddhist* ideal which is in not running away from life but remaining a part

of it and doing good to mankind. What arrangement can be superior to the good of the people than having a benevolent king? So *Manimekalai* tells him:

> ...."What ails you who wears garlands?
> I came to your country to invite you here
> Only to make you fully aware
> Of your past, and make your name known
> In these small and large islands. When the kings
> Of the earth take to a life of *dharma*,
> What better way to save the world from evil?
> If you ask what is *dharma*, hear this.
> Forget not! No greater good deed is there
> Than to give mankind food, clothes and shelter!"[19]

Aaputhran is *Sathanar's* attempt to portray the *Bodhisattva* ideal in all its crystalline purity and universal significance.

3. *Udayakumaran*

Though *Udayakumaran* has not much of a role in the epic, his presence is seminal to the plot. *Sathanar* takes great care in delineating his character. He is an ideal Prince, noble-looking like the God *Subramania* and totally fearless. He walks into the epic immediately after having brought under control the royal elephant *Kalavegan* which had run amok causing widespread destruction in *Pukar's* principal roads. His love for *Manimekalai* has society's sanction, for in those days royalty was not circumscribed from having relationship with courtesans. The courtesan of ancient India was a cultured person, well-versed in the fine arts and was considered an ornamental part of the royal retinue. *Manimekalai's* grandmother, *Chitrapati*, traces her lineage from heavenly dancers like *Rambha* and *Tilottama*. She eggs on *Udayakumaran* to consider *Manimekalai* as his right. In fact, he is abashed by the dream in which Goddess *Manimekala* advises him to abandon his designs upon the maid. However, when *Chitrapati* is incensed by *Manimekalai* going around in the public with a begging bowl, she goes straight to the Prince and tells him to pluck the flower that is in full bloom.

It is Doom that has come to *Udayakumaran* in the person of *Chitrapati*. He goes to the Town Hall where he converses with *Manimekalai*. She is slightly upset because she knows the Prince had been her husband *Rahulan* in a previous birth. Armed with tremendous self-control, she does not betray her feelings. Instead, she speaks words of wisdom in all humility. This physical body is bound to birth, ageing, sickness and death. Indeed, a vessel for sorrows. Why should he pursue it? She hides herself in *Kayachantikai's* form. This only inflames his desire. He returns to the Hall later, determined to take her away by force:

.... "Even should
The wise criticise or the King get angry
I shall seize that girl with lovely tresses
When she comes out of the Assembly Hall,
And place her on my golden chariot.
It will then be time enough to listen
To her learning, and old words of wisdom."[20]

As irony would have it, *Kanchanan* mistakes *Manimekalai* for his beloved. To avoid the *Vidhyadhara's* attentions, *Manimekalai* goes to *Udayakumaran* and engages him in talk that is meant to create *asubha bhavana* in the listener for things worldly. Having recognised *Manimekalai*, the Prince mistakes her intentions. Is she trying to scare him away so that she can join the *Vidhyadhara?* Doom-impelled, *Udayakumaran* returns at night to the Hall like a man entering an ant-hole in which a poisonous cobra is hidden. The cobra is *Kanchanan*. He cuts down the Prince mercilessly.

When *Sathanar* links the Prince with his earlier birth as *Rahulan* we have an interesting opportunity to study the character. To prove the irrevocable decree of *karma*, *Sathanar* makes the Prince a victim of *Kanchanan's* accidental judgement leading to the casual slaughter. It was an accidental judgement that had made *Rahulan* cut down an innocent cook who had stumbled when *Rahulan* spread a royal feast to the Sage *Brahmadatta*.

"Persons who say 'god will save the devotees
From results of sinful actions' are fools.
Even if due to love of righteousness
An evil is done, fate will not be denied.
When fate does catch up, that life will suffer.
The same life, should it perform wholesome deeds
Could also attain release from all births."[21]

Except for this lack of self-control when faced by anger, *Rahulan* and the Prince are alike in every way. But while *Rahulan* is shown as the happy husband of *Lakshmi (Manimekalai* in her earlier birth), such joy of union is denied to Prince *Udayakumaran* partly because *Manimekalai* is no Princess and partly because she prefers to enter the nunnery under the strong influence of her mother, *Madhavi*. *Udayakumaran's* story might have been different if *Manimekalai* had been able to turn him away from mere lustful thoughts to a spiritual way of life as indicated by the earlier birth when *Lakshmi* had successfully taught *Rahulan* the need for humility and together they had fed the Sage *Sadhuchakra*. As Goddess *Manimekala* assures the maid, this good deed would ensure them divine Grace at some future birth. However, in this birth, *Udayakumaran* dies a tragic death.

4. *Aravana Adigal*

In this epic written to glorify the *Buddhist* ideal of compassion, the

figure of Saint *Aravana* acquires a special significance. Here is the ideal monk, the *bhikshu*, realised soul who nevertheless moves among the common people helping them with his sage counsel, gentle nature and sweet words. The very first time we hear of him through *Madhavi*, a venerable figure appears before our inner vision. According to *Sathanar*, Saint *Aravana* is "the sinless Sage *Aravana* of spotless wisdom." His words are the quintessence of *Buddhist* philosophy:

"Those who are born are bound to sorrow.
They who escape birth gain eternal joy.
Attachment leads to the former; the latter
Is the gain of the non-attached."[22]

From now onwards he appears at the time of an intense spiritual need, when his devotees need right guidance in their life's journey. And each time, something is added to the lovable nobility of his nature. When *Manimekalai* receives the gift of the nectar-vessel, she immediately hastens to Saint *Aravana* along with *Madhavi* and *Sutamati*. He recounts to them their earlier birth and speaks words of wisdom. He is aware that lecturing on ethical and moral precepts is generally of not much use in this world of human affairs. He must have experienced plenty of disappointments in this regard during his long life. And yet he will not give up his duty:

"The vast sheet of ocean-water cannot
Go through the wire-pierced hole in the gem.
But as the tiny droplets of water
Which drip through, it is as yet possible
To gain *dharma* in this world."[23]

As for *Manimekalai*, his firm guidance is: "Remove the sickness of hunger!"

"You have received the life-giving vessel,
Valuable *Amuda Surabhi*.
I shall speak to you of the One Law
Which is common to man and gods; that is
'Curing the disease of hunger;' thus spake
The venerable sage in words of wisdom."[24]

He then tells *Manimekalai* and her mothers the story of *Aaputhran* to underline the importance of this service. Incidentally, he teaches them to abjure the folly of caste distinctions and the pride of power.

Sage *Aravana* appears next in the epic when *Madhavi* seeks his help to get *Manimekalai* released from the Queen's custody. By the time he comes to the palace, the Queen has realised her own folly and recognised *Manimekalai's* greatness. Sage *Aravana's* coming brings light into the spiritual darkness that had so far held the palace in its thrall. He blesses them all,

including *Chitrapati:* "May discriminatory understanding be yours!" To the Queen's welcome, he replies that he is now like the setting sun and then gives a clear enunciation of *Buddhist* theology and exhorts all the ladies present to follow *Dharma* so as to reap the result of good deeds.

"By avoiding the ten evils above,
And holding to discipline and charity
They are born among the three best: godheads,
Humans and *Brahmas:* and living as such
They reap the results as an endless bliss."[25]

Our final meeting with Saint *Aravana* takes place when we see him explaining in detail to *Manimekalai* the subtle points of *Buddhist* doctrines. The scene where the aged monk leads the young nun from darkness to light and from ignorance to knowledge is firmly etched in our hearts as we hear his last words in the epic that light the flame of discrimination:

"It is no outsider who keeps us in
Bondage or release or causes either.
All that we described as above are caused
By desire, anger and illusion.
To snap attachment by recognising
Impermanence, pain, soullessness and dirt;
May your anger cease by good consciousness
Of friendship, compassion and joyful thought.
Give up illusion by reading scriptures,
By meditation, contemplation and
Realisation. Be freed from mental
Darkness by these four!"[26]

Saint *Aravana* is *Sathanar's* triumph of realism. The saint belongs to the finest part of India's ancient heritage which is based on self-sacrifice, true knowledge and sterling renunciation. No doubt *Sathanar* was inspired by a living saint, probably his own teacher. In any case Saint *Aravana* is a wonderful image of the ideal monk envisioned by the *Buddha:*

"A preacher must be like a man who in quest of water digs a well in an arid tract of land. So long as he sees that the sand is dry and white, he knows that the water is still far off. But let him not be troubled or give up the task as hopeless. The work of removing the dry sand must be done so that he can dig down deeper into the ground. And often the deeper he has to dig, the cooler and purer and more refreshing will the water be.

When after some time of digging he sees that the sand becomes moist, he accepts it as a foretoken that the water is near.

So long as the people do not listen to the words of truth, the preacher knows that he has to dig deeper into their hearts; but when they begin to heed his words he apprehends that they will soon attain enlightenment."[27]

Incidentally, this description may be used as a printer to the manner in which we should approach *Manimekalai.* As we dig deeper within the folds of mythology, dramatic action and violent passions, a time comes when the pure spring of *Manimekalai's* character appears before us. Refreshing, inspiring, elevating. A world where such selfless service and divine compassion are present, is a safe world. All we can do is to bow in humility and gratitude.

5. *Manimekalai* in *Silappadhikaram*

Among the references to the story of *Manimekalai* in the epic *Silappadhikaram*, three passages stand out for our approach. The first of these occurs when *Kovalan, Kannaki* and the nun *Kavunti* tarry in the outskirts of *Maturai* city. *Matalan* of *Kaveri-p-poompattinam* who is passing by, spends sometime talking to the travellers about the recent past and touches upon the birth of *Manimekalai:*

"Far-famed by receiving royal honours,
The gold-complexioned *Madhavi* gave birth
To a sweet little babe: when the days of
Confinement were over, the ancient
Ageing courtesans decided:
'Let us give a lovely name to the babe
Born to *Madhavi.*' You were there then
And heard these words that were pleasure-giving
And you said: 'Long ago an ancestor of mine
Was ship-wrecked in mid-ocean.
As he had performed charity in earlier lives
He managed to swim and keep alive.
A goddess appeared before him and said:
I live here by *Indra's* orders.
I am *Manimekala.* 'Do not worry.
As the good results of your earlier charities
Your sorrows would cease, and you would escape
This ocean of sorrow. She took him in the air
And placed him on the beach. Name the baby
After the goddess who saved my ancestor.'
A thousand maids wearing jewelled belts
Blessed the child as *Manimekalai.*
On that day, along with auspicious *Madhavi*
You gave away a shower of gold."

Towards the close of the epic, we see the *Chera* King *Senguttuvan* returning victorious after his battles in the North and preparing to initiate *Kannaki* worship. *Matalan* comes to him and tells him of what happened at *Pukar* after the *Maturai* tragedy.

"Hearing of the tragic events, the good *Madhavi*
Said to her mother: 'I shan't wear jewels any more.
Do not allow *Manimekalai* to enter
The lowly profession of a courtesan.'
She shed her flower-bedecked tresses,
Performed *Buddhist* charity
And became a nun engaged in *dharmic* acts."

The last canto of *Silappadhikaram* opens with an account of *Manimekalai's* renunciation. *Senguttuvan* has installed the image of *Kannaki* in a temple and worship has begun. *Senguttuvan* desires to know about *Manimekalai* and *Kannaki's* friend *Devanthi* speaks of the renunciation of *Manimekalai* who was indeed the loveliest among the jewelled courtesans of *Kaveri-p-poompattinam*.

"*Madhavi's* mother unveiled her thoughts.
'*Manimekalai's* tresses are now dark
And have reached the apex of youth's gloss.
The red streaked lovely eyes of the girl
Have received the wine of dissembling.
Innocent seems the gentle smile
That unbars a splash of corals
To reveal a line of shiny pearls.
The breasts have risen with pride.
Pale, the figure is ready for hugging.
The waist is all movement.
Again, her hips are spreading.
The thighs are attractively healthy.
Her tiny feet rejecting lacquer
Are like fresh shoots dipped in ghee.
The dance-master makes no progress.
Indeed, he is far behind in lessons.
If things continue like this,
The pillars of our society will not
Accept *Manimekalai* as their danseuse.
What is your opinion?'
'Come, my little one, *Manimekalai!*'
So called out *Madhavi* and took the girl
With her. She removed the flower-bedecked
Tresses of *Manimekalai*, forcing Cupid
To throw away his bow and arrows in despair.
Performing charity, she made her daughter a nun.

The King and the citizens of *Pukar*
Were saddened by *Manimekalai's* renunciation
As if they had lost a jewel in the deep sea.
The righteous Saint *Aravana* assured them
That the maid had told him of the act.
Even though she was too young to renounce,
She gave up her *Lakshmi*-like image,
Saddening me beyond words'
Said *Devanthi* to the *Chera* King."

FOOT NOTES

1. *Silappadhikaram*, Padikam, u. 54-60.
2. *Buddhism as Expounded in Manimekalai* (1978), p.58.
3. (XIX, ll. 57-74).
4. XXIII, 11. 73-79.
5. *Boudhamum Thamizhum* (1980), p. 136.
6. II, 11. 64-67.
7. IV, 11. 113-121.
8. IV, 11. 26-42.
9. XI, 11. 92-98.
10. V.Kanakasabhai, *Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago* (1966), p. 11.
11. *The Gospel of Buddha* (1987), p.63.
12. IV, 11. 13-17.
13. V, 11. 88-93.
14. Bhikshu Sangharakshita, *A Survey of Buddhism* (1976), p. 159.
15. Sri Aurobindo, *Savitri* (1954), p. 18.
16. XIV, 11. 44-48.
17. XIII, 11. 63-69.

18. XIII, ll. 49-56.

19. XXV, ll. 222-231.

20. XX, ll. 13-19.

21. XXI, ll. 63-69.

22. II, ll. 64-67.

23. XII, ll. 65-69.

24. XII, ll. 114-119.

25. XXIV, ll. 136-140.

26. XXX, ll. 250-261.

27. *The Gospel of Buddha* (Told by Paul Carus, 1987), p. 109.

Introduction

Rivalling the sun at dawn in the lightning sheen
Of her glowing form and flowing tresses
Is the goddess on the Golden Hill crest.
Hearkening to Mother Earth's tale of woe
She stood beneath the *jamun* tree doing
Austerities to destroy the Enemy,
And then went South to found *Sambapathi*.
Kaantan,the worthy scion of the Sun
Dynasty, questing for water for his land
Prayed to the immortal *Agastya* who
Overturned his pot and made *Kaveri* flow
Due East reaching fast *Sambapathi*
And merge grandly with the ocean close-by.
The goddess of immense austerities
Rose to welcome the flowing holiness:
"Beloved! *Ganga* of the skies above!
Quencher-light of this land's water-thirst! Come!"
On this the Sage who followed *Kaveri* said:
"Mother! This lady of enriched tapas
Deserves your obeisance. Bow unto her."
The maid of Bharat land which is praised
In great poetry, child of the righteous *Chola* kings,
The goddess of Tamil who never fails
Even should the Zodiac trip to cause a long summer;
Kaveri bowed to *Samba* divine; She,

Delighted, spoke, sitting in lotus pose:
"While forming the six-fold world of gods
And worlds of the four directions, *Brahma*
Gave my name to this city now ancient.
I rename it after you. May you prosper!"
The announcement came of the festival
To the God of hundred sacrifices
In this dread city famed by the twin names;
Chitrapati sent a message to *Madhavi*
Through *Vasanthamalai* when rumours buzzed;
Manimekalai entered the lovely garden
To gather blossoms for *Buddha's* worship;
She sought the marble room's privacy
When she found the Prince coming towards her;
The appearance of goddess *Manimekalai* there
When the Prince who had by then seen the maid
And grown desire-filled, had gone away;
She took the maid to *Manipallava* isle;
Returning to the garden , the goddess
Famed far and wide, woke up *Sutamati*,
In the distant island the virgin pure
Also woke up and sorrowed at her lonely state;
Perceiving a shining gem-studded Seat
She adored it and learnt of her past lives;
The wondrous goddess then returned and removed
The maid's worry and taught her three *mantras*.
There came then the deity *Dipatilakai*
And gave the lovely girl a divine vessel;
With the vessel she joined her mothers
To pay homage to *Aravana*, the austere;
Sage *Aravana* recounted to her
The inspiring story of *Aaputhran*;
Of how *Chinta Devi* gave the vessel
In her hand to *Aaputhran* in the past;
In search of beginning its ministry
The maid carried the vessel to the street;
Into the pot held forth by the lovely maid
A woman of chaste character placed food;
The damsel cured *Kayachantikai* of her
Constant hunger and went to the Town Hall;

On learning of her presence in the Hall
The Prince, decked with fresh garlands, went there.
To escape the Prince's advances
She changed into a *Vidhyadhara* form,
Proceeded to the royal prison house
And made it a mansion of righteousness;
As the Prince would still not give up the pursuit,
Kanchana, the husband of *Kayachantikai*,
Stabbed fatally the son of the King;
The maid lamented the Prince's sad end
And was comforted by the divine voice;
The King of the land imprisoned the girl
And later released her from confinement;
The virgin spoke to the Queen of *Dharma*,
Then went to the land ruled by *Aaputhran*.
With him the maid lovely in her jewels,
Proceeded to the isle of *Manipallavam;*
Returning to her motherland *Vanji*
In the garb of an ascetic, the maid
Went to various sectarian masters
Asking for the essence of their teaching;
Again, she went to *Kanchi* town to meet
Her mothers and also peerless *Aravana;*
Removing the false garb, the virgin joyed
To bow to her mothers and *Aravana;*
Putting on a nun's vestments, she listened
To the Way and took to austerities
For overcoming the ills of mortal birth.
Such is the tale told to Prince *Ilango*
By the able *Koolavanikan Sathan:*
Composed in thirty cantos he entitled it
The Renunciation of *Manimekalai*
And this brought glory to the Tamil world.

Line 3. Goddess : Goddess Sambapathi

Golden Hill : Meru Mountain

Line 5. jamun : Jambu in Sanskrit, this rose apple tree is said to have been abundant in one of the seven continents surrounding the mountain Meru, and hence the continent was named Jambu-dvipa or Jambu-khanda.

Line 7. Sambapathi : Named after the presiding deity, Sambapathi is said to have been the original name of Kaveri-p-poom-pattinam (Pukar) which seems to have gone under the sea.

Line 8. Kaantan : A Chola King

Line 10. Agastya : One of the Seven Sages, Agastya was born out of the sacrificial pot of Brahma. He is closely associated with early Tamil civilization. He married the Vidharbha Princess, Lopamudra. Agastya appears to have authored the first book of Tamil grammar, Agathiyam which is now lost. Trina Dhoomagni, the author of Tolkappiyam is referred to as a prominent student of Agastya.

Line 14. Refers to Goddess Sambapathi

Line 18. Sage : Agastya

Lines 21-24 The reference is to the river Kaveri.

Line 25. She : Goddess Sambapathi

Line 27. six-fold world of Gods : According to Buddhist cosmology these six are Maharajika, Trayatrimsa, Yama, Tushita, Nirmanarati and Paranirmita Vasavarthi worlds.

Line 28.	worlds of the four directions	: These in the Buddhist cosmology are twenty in number and are Brahmakayika, Brahmapurohita, Mahabrahma, Pareethapa, Abrahmanapa, Apasvara, Pareethasubha, Abrahmanasubha, Subhakrisha, Brahatpala, Asamgyasat, Appraka, Atapa, Sudarasana, Sudarsi, Akanishta, Akasanantyayatana, Vijnananantyayatana, Akinchanyayatana and Naiva Samgyayatana worlds.
Line 30.	Renamed as Kaveri-p-poompattinam (Pukar) or The sea-side city of Kaveri.	
Line 32.	God of hundred sacrifices	: Indra
Line 33.	Twin names	: Sambapathi, Kaveri-p-poompattinam
	Dread city	: which strikes terror in the enemy's heart.
Line 34.	Chitrapati	: grand-mother of Manimekalai
	Madhavi	: Mother of Manimekalai
Line 39.	Prince	: Udayakumaran
Line 40.	goddess Manimekalai	: the family deity of Manimekalai's father Kovalan.
Line 43.	She	: Goddess Manimekala
Line 45.	Sutamati	: Manimekalai's foster-mother
Line 46.	virgin pure	: Manimekalai
Line 50.	wondrous goddess	: Goddess Manimekala.

Line 51.	three mantras	: The incantations would give the ability to change one's form, to fly in the air and to remain free from hunger.
Line 54.	mothers	: Madhavi and Sutamati.
Line 61.	the maid	: Manimekalai
Line 63.	A woman of pure character	: Aadirai.
Line 64.	Kayachantikai	: A Vidhyadhara damsel
Line 69.	Vidhyadhara	: a celestial denizen
Line 81.	him	: the present ruler of Savaka which was ruled by Aaputhran at an earlier time.
Line 89.	false garb	: the garb of an ascetic Manimekalai had assumed.
Line 94.	Prince Ilango	: author of Cilappatikaram.

I. The Announcement of the Festival

(In ancient times, the *Chola* King *Thodi-thol Sembiyan,* commanded by Sage *Agastya,* went to *Indra* with a request: "You must remain in our city during the twenty-eight days of the festival we celebrate in your honour." *Indra* agreed. The elders of the city like religious heads, astrologers and merchants, came to the reigning king *Killivalavan* and asked him to arrange the annual festival since a failure to celebrate the festival would invite the wrath of the guardian daemons of the city. Accordingly, the big drum of the temple was placed on an elephant, and taken through the main streets of *Kaveri-p-poompattinam* by divisions of infantry and cavalry. The public-crier beat the drum announcing the festival and called upon the citizens to beautify the environs. The successful celebration of the festival would ensure the health of body and mind; hatred would flee the land).

Bidden by the Sage of the *Potikai* hills
To further the fame of the prime city
Whose people never stray from traditions,
Sembiyan, destroyer of sky-high forts,
Stood in *Indra's* presence, all respect:
"Dwell in my capital city on earth
During the twenty-eight days of festival
Which even the gods above love to watch."
The Lord of the Immortals assented.
Since wise citizens will not let it lapse,
Sectarian chiefs who speak of scriptures,
Ethics, philosophy and Attainment
And themselves practise the precepts well,
Expert astrologers, divine beings
Who prefer to go about in human guise,
Merchants from countries of different speech,
The Cabinet of Five, the Group of Eight,
Gathered and said: "Should we ignore the festival,
The shopping-complex daemon that relieved our King

Of pain in heavens would sure cause distress
Thundering, baring its violent teeth
With russet mouth agape; inimical
Would the daemon of the Square act to all
Which hitherto but killed the evil ones
With its noose; announce the festivities
That bring together kings from all over the earth!"
The scented drum in the Thunderbolt Temple
Was placed on the back of an elephant.
The traditional drummer with a stick beat
The drum wrought of bull's hide, whose thunder
Summoned death with its desire for blood.
He announced: "Long live our city ancient!
May the rains fall in plenty! May our King
Be benevolent, holding to the right path!
Our elders knew for certain that when
This auspicious jubilee is held to
Honour our island, *Indra*, his four-fold
Gods, and the Eighteen godheads
Famed for their special propitiating grace
Come here leaving the heavens forlorn
As this city was when King *Karikala*
Went northwards in search of new victories.
Place brimful pots, golden cups of fresh grain shoots,
Ornamented lamps and other symbols
In our festooned streets and blemishless thresholds;
Adorn spaces with rows of areca palms,
Plantains, golden creepers and sugarcane;
Hang artistically-threaded pearl strings
On golden pillars lining the pials.
Remove old sand from celebration-ready
Roads and halls; spread new sand everywhere.
Drape banners in strings and on bamboo poles
High-waving on terraces and house-fronts!
Celebrate each god's festival in a
Grand scale according to custom to suit
The respective modes in temples from that
Of Siva to the Daemon of the Square!
Those of you who can lecture on wise maxims
Enter the cool tents and shaded Town Halls!

Others who can argue the merits of
Various sects, ascend the appropriate seats.
Should there be inflamed enemies avoid
Raging confrontation and go away.
Have you followed me? Act thus in these days
Twenty-eight, when gods mingle with humans
Here on white sands, flowering groves, cool
River-banks, and tree-lined lakes at the fete."
Accompanied by sword-wielding soldiers,
Chariots, horses and elephants, he
Sounded the drum: "May hunger disease and hate
Cease. May rains and prosperity increase!"
Thus he proclaimed the festival in the city.

Line 1.	The Sage of Potikai hills	: Agastya
Line 2.	Prime city	: Kaveri-p-poompattinam
Line 4.	Sembiyan	: A Chola King
Line 10.	it	: The Festival for Indra
Line 11.	Sectarian chiefs	: Religious heads who could expertly expound their philosophical systems such as Veda-based theology, Ajivaka vada, Nigrantha, Sankhya, Vaiseshika, and Bhuta vada.
Line 17.	Cabinet of Five	: The Council consisting of Ministers, Brahmins, Military Commanders, Ambassadors and Spies which helped the King with administrative matters.
	Group of Eight	: The royal attendants consisting of "perfumers, garland-makers, betel-bearers, arecanut servers, armourers, dressing valets, torch or light-bearers

and body-guards" (V.Kanakasabhai).

Line 19-20 The Daemon that taught a chant to King Muchukunda to relieve him from the darkness that had affected his vision and mind when the rakshasas were battling with him.

Lines 22-25 The guardian-daemon of the city square who held sway at the cross-roads.

Line 27. The Vajra-k-kottam where Indra's Thunderbolt was worshipped.

Line 37. Four-fold gods : Vasus (8), Divakaras (12), Rudras (11) and Maruts (2).

Line 41. King Karikala : A Chola King of the first century A.D. who is said to have led his victorious army upto the Himalayas. He was also a far-sighted administrator who encouraged industries, built tanks and patronised poets and scholars.

2. A Web of Rumours

(On the opening day of the festival, the citizens miss the presence of *Pukar's* famous dancers, *Madhavi* and *Manimekalai*. *Madhavi's* mother *Chitrapati* hears of rumours that criticise the dancing girls for non-participation. She sends *Madhavi's* friend *Vasanthamalai* to persuade the former to take part in the festivities. *Vasanthamalai* speaks of the superb attainments of *Madhavi* in the world of art. Must all this be wasted because of *Madhavi's* renunciation? But *Madhavi* is firm. Her preceptor *Aravana Adigal* has shown her the path of light. Neither she nor *Manimekalai* would ever return to the life of a court danseuse. *Vasanthamalai* retraces her steps in sorrow).

The first day of the *Indra* festival
Held in the great island of *Jambu* tree
By the guardian deity, now began;
The absence of *Manimekalai* and
Madhavi was felt with rising distress
By *Chitrapati;* deeply sorrowing
She called out to her lovely daughter's friend
Vasanthamalai; "Go to her and speak
Of the rumours buzzed by the common man."
Vasanthamalai too had been oppressed
By *Madhavi's* renunciation; hence
She hastened to *Madhavi* in the Hall
Where flowers are strung for *Buddha's* worship.
Grieving in heart at the frail form of her
Who once was all softness and bejewelled,
She said: "Goddess-like maid! Hear why I came.
What ill-will have you against this city?
You have excelled in arts meant for kings
And commoners; in music and rhythm,
The song-varieties of lute and dance,
Skilled in striking the drum and blowing the flute,
In playing the ball and cooking tasty food,
Preparing scented powders and bathing,
Decorating the bed and proper disport,

In excercises and understanding,
Appropriate speech and self-effacement,
In penmanship and stringing blossoms fresh,
In the art of dress and threading pearls,
Knowledge of Time and other arts many;
And a deep study of the books on dance
With visual aids had been yours too,
O golden maid with faultless knowledge!
It is not for such as you to renounce
The world, say the elders of this city
And the common people with one voice.
We do not like such words. It is shameful."
Madhavi said to *Vasanthamalai:*
"Ah! I lost my place of honour in this
Golden city from the day when
I clung to life even after learning
Of the woe that struck my beloved: Shameless me!
The truly chaste give up their lives in flames
Of their own sighs rising hot as the fire
In an active furnace; else, enter the pyre
As if into a lake of cool waters;
If they do not enter the blazing fire
They would then accept a life-long penance
To join their husbands hereafter.
Our lady was not of this kind.
Unable to accept her husband's woe
She plucked out her youthful lovely breast
Covered by cascading tresses and tears
Flinging which, she caused the fire that burnt
The famed city; such the noble mother
To whom *Manimekalai* is daughter;
Never will she lead an immoral life.
She will walk always the path of purity.
Besides, listen to this, O lovely girl!
I took refuge in this monastery.
Bowing at the feet of the sinless sage
Aravana of spotless wisdom,
My mind in swoon due to the great sorrow,
I gave vent to my heart's desolation.
'Those who are born are bound to sorrow.

They who escape birth gain eternal joy.
Attachment leads to the former; the latter
Is the gain of the non-attached," he said
And explained the five-fold austerities:
'These the means to overcome your grief.'
Explain all this to our dear friends
And *Chitrapati*, my mother."
Hearing these words *Vasanthamalai*
Grew melancholy at heart like one
Who had lost a priceless jewel in the sea.
Feeling quite helpless, she turned back homewords.

Line 3.	the guardian deity	: Sambapathi
Line 4.	absence	: absence from the festivities
Line 5.	Madhavi	: Manimekalai's mother
Line 6.	Chitrapati	: Madhavi's mother
Line 14.	her	: Madhavi
Lines 18–19	'Vettiyal' was the dance exhibited exclusively for royalty; 'Poduvial' was for public consumption.	
Line 29.	Knowledge of Time	: astrology
Line 36.	such words	: criticism directed against Madhavi.
Line 41.	beloved	: Kovalan who was executed by the Pandyan King.
Line 49.	our Lady	: Kannaki
Line 54.	the famed city	: Madurai

Line 55. Madhavi speaks of Manimekalai as Kannaki's own daughter, as she would have her follow the footsteps of the chaste, lawfully-wedded wife of Kovalan.

Line 56. she : Manimekalai

Line 62. sorrow : Kovalan's death

Line 68. five-fold austerities : The giving up of Lust, Killing, Intoxicating drinks, Falsehood and Stealing.

3. Entry into the Flower Garden

(*Madhavi's* remembrance of the tragic past brings tears to *Manimekalai's* eyes. The tears fall upon the garlands being prepared by *Manimekalai*. *Madhavi* asks her to gather new flowers as these have become impure. *Sutamati* does not like the idea of *Manimekalai* going out alone. It was during such a festival that she herself had been abducted, despoiled and abandoned. And *Manimekalai* is so lovely! *Sutamati* and *Manimekalai* go out together to the *upavana*. On their way they see several festival sights. Here is a Jain monk who is teased by a drunkard. A little distance away comes a madman. A hijra is seen dancing in one corner surrounded by an eager crowd. Little children dressed in beautiful ornaments are being taken by their mothers in little chariots as if announcing the commencement of the festival of *Subramanya*. Some of the citizens draw close to *Manimekalai* and express their unhappiness that so much loveliness has been denied to their festivities. *Sutamati* and *Manimekalai* enter the fine garden meant for *Buddha's* worship).

Manimekalai's fate being near
Even as the scent when the flower
Is ready to bloom, her soul was aflame
When she heard of the terrible sorrow
That had sung her parents as recounted
By *Madhavi* to *Vasanthamalai*;
The loving heart of the maid melted
Sending forth tears that washed away
The lines of *khol* and fell on the flowers
Drenching the garlands made of fresh blossoms;
Madhavi looked into the pretty face of
Manimekalai and as a lotus
Close to the moon wiped the tears with her hands.
"This sacred garland has lost purity.
Bring new blooms," she said: *Sutamati* there
Who was stringing flowers along with her
Whose tresses had honeyed blossoms on them

Said: "If Cupid should happen to see
The blue jewel-eyes in the moon-like face
Of *Manimekalai* stained with tears
Mourning for the heart-rending events
That had overtaken the noble elders,
He would be quite overwhelmed by shock.
If so, can mere men be indifferent?
Indeed, if they are unmoved, they be eunuchs.
Besides, O beautiful lady, hearken
To the reason why I live in this place.
In *Samba* rich with ocean merchandise
Where live farmer-merchants, was a brahmin
Kowsika, whose daughter I was born.
Fearless me, of unsuspecting heart,
I went to a garden to cull flowers.
Marutavega, a *Vidhyadhara*,
Who was on his way to this city to watch
The festival celebrations to *Indra*,
Wearing flower garlands and golden jewels,
A nobler figure earth had never seen,
Lifted me to the skies, and flew away.
There I yielded to his will and lived.
Later he abandoned me in this city
And went back to his place far away.
This creeper-like *Manimekalai*
Cannot go alone to gather flowers.
The royal garden with water fountains
Which has green houses of flowering trees
Is meant for the maids of the King's household;
In these days of festival to *Indra*
Who would go there but the gods from above?
The bees buzzing, the trees will seem to be
Swaying with garlands that never fade.
Hence they say the Spirit holding the Noose
Guards the grove; people who know avoid it.
There is then the garden of *Sampati*
Where stayed the Bird which lost its wings to Sun's
  heat;
Also the grove where lived the Sage *Kavera*
The begetter of river *Kaveri*;

As these places are sentinelled by two
Fierce old crones, none dares to go therein.
Another garden which has many trees
That bloom by the orders of the one Lord
Whose sterling aim is to guard living things,
Show them kindness and wrap them with his love,
Is for us; there you find a marble room
That is sound-proof: but has transparent walls.
Within is a brilliant Lotus Seat
Jewel-studded: if you place buds on it
They bloom and never fade through the years.
Nor will any bees disturb their petals.
One more point to mention, *Madhavi;*
Should one pray to other gods and offer
Flowers here, the blooms would move away
And reach the gods meditated upon.
If the minds were unattached, the flowers would
  remain.
Well may you ask: 'Why is it even thus?'
It was built by *Mayan* in bygone days
To show through the language of flowers that
Unlike what the austere ones speak of
Absence of conation as having effect still,
This phenomenon favours them who say
Karma follows not where no attachment is.
Lady, no other garden but this one
Is of safest approach to your girl.
O good one! I shall also now go to
Pluck flowers there with *Manimekalai.*"
Thus did *Sutamati* walk on the road
Where chariots move, with the gentle maid.
Holding a balancing pole with bowls came
A monk from the sinless *Jina* temple,
One who had given up abashment and clothes,
Anxious lest he harm invisible lives.
He was fasting, and with body all unwashed
Like a mad elephant. "Come, Sir! I bow
At thy feet, O Sir! Listen to my words.
Torture not the life that has entered
Your body as one condemned in a cell:

Whatwas it my Lord spoke of that gives us here,
Beyond and in the end eternal joy?
Where is murder in the wine that flows out
Of the palm spathes? O monk of true penance!
Why not try yoga by drinking this wine?
If not pleased, then you could bid me good-bye!"
So a drunkard accosted him and urged
Him to drink as the citizens watched.
His shoulders bound with red oleanders,
A madman came garlanded with cone-shaped
Madar buds, dressed in clothes that were tattered
And were tied here and there with small twigs.
His body was smeared with ash and sandalpaste.
He muttered worthless words to those on way,
Crying and falling, screaming and screeching,
Bowing and getting up, reeling around,
Running in circles, rushing to a corner,
And standing up again: duelling with his shadow
At times: people stood sorrowing, watching
The sad antics of this insane person.
Thick tresses stepped with lovely ringlets,
Coral red lips, teeth of white brilliance,
Large russet-lined eyes, earrings of white conch;
Brows like dark creepers, crescent-shaped forhead;
Hands like rosy *kantal* blooms, youthful breasts,
A spread of the sides and creeper-thin waist;
Knee-length dress, sandal-painting of the skin:
Attired thus one essayed the eunuch-step
Danced in times of yore by Lord Krishna's son
In Bana's city; some stood viewing him.
In this city full of strangers' voices
Others surveyed the attractive paintings
Done by experts on the white-washed walls high
Of many storeys, who drew likenesses
Of all varieties of living things
And also of spotless divinities.
On the festival-happy path, one saw
Children wearing jewelled golden chains
Their tresses pasted with white mustard,
Their top decorated with pearl-strings

Around tresses held together by a clasp:
From their lips yet in the lisping stage
Dribbling drops made their guardian strings wet;
The decorative scarf wound round their waist
Waved in the breeze with rows of shining gems;
These jewel-weighted toddlers were placed on
Toy chariots and elephants of gold
By ladies who cried: "Come hither and see
The beginning of the festival
Dedicated to *Subramania!*"
Many surrounded *Manimekalai*
Like the shouting mob of *Virata* city
Which had gathered around the eunuch, *Arjuna.*
They spoke in pain: "The mother who consigned
Such beauty to dreadful austerities
Is cruel; nor maternal in her love.
Should this maid go in for culling blooms
Shall not the lovely swans withdraw in shame?
Can they vie with her superior gait?
Should the peacocks come near her, it were
To learn from this maid her excellent poise.
The lisp of the parrots can never be
As sweet as hers: where is her equal?"
Bottle-flowers, saffron, lime, laburnum,
Tilak, Vakul, scarlet-stalked ixora,
Bitter orange, gamboge, many-branched mastwood,
Pitava, jasmine, crooked-thorned screw-pine,
Kutaja, bamboo, thick-trunked *Asoka,*
Cherunti, the kino, massive *Champak,*
Fiery-blossomed silk-cotton; the blooms
Of these spread like an extended painting
By an expert artist making the grove
Unequalled: her rose-red feet gently treading
The earth, *Manimekalai,* escorted
By *Sutamati,* bowed at the entrance
And went inside to gather fresh flowers.

Line 1. Fate : 'Etu-nikalchi' (Skt. Hetu Prabhava)

which literally means "the showing up of the cause." This is one of the stages in the spiritual progress of the Buddhist disciple, and points to the time when the actions performed in the past bring forth their consequences.

"The statement of Madhavi to Vasanthamalai, her companion regarding the pathetic death of Kovalan, was the motive force for the decision of renouncing the worldly life on the part of her daughter, Manimekalai. That is to say the proper time had come for Manimekalai to reap the fruits of her good deeds in the past birth. This law of cause and effect that operated in the life of Manimekalai is compared to a fine flower which, when only proper time comes smells sweet."

– N.Balusamy, Studies in Manimekalai, p.75.

Line 9.	khol	: eye shadow
Line 10.	lotus	: Madhavi's hand
Line 13.	moon	: Manimekalai's face
Line 15.	Sutamati	: Madhavi's companion
Line 16.	her	: Manimekalai
Line 22.	noble elders	: Kovalan and Kannaki
Line 40.	this city	: Kaveri-p-poompattinam.
Line 53.	Sampati	: The eagle celebrated in the Ramayana.

A son of Aruna, Sampati lost his wings when he flew close to the Sun and was immobilised thereafter through his long life.

Line 60. One Lord : Lord Buddha

Line 75. Mayan : the divine sculptor

Lines 76-80. "This divine seat was so made as to illustrate that those who do not put their heart and soul in any undertaking of theirs, will not derive any benefit thereof and those who do things with a purpose and resolution of mind would reap the fruit."

- N.Balusamy, Studies in Manimekalai, p.72.

Line 102. him : the Jina monk

Line 106. Madar blossoms are said to induce madness, if consumed.

Lines 124-125. According to the Hindu legends, Banasura imprisoned Krishna's grandson, Anirudda. Krishna's son Pradyumna dressed himself up as a eunuch and danced in the streets of Bana's capital to gain Anirudda's release.

Line 138. guardian string : A string with tiny replicas of Vishnu a conch, discus, mace, sword and bow to invoke the Lord's grace to guard the child.

Line 147. Virata city : The city in Mahabharata where the Pandavas took refuge, disguised as a royal companion (Yudhistira), a cook (Bhima), a eunuch (Arjuna), a stable-keeper (Nakula) and a keeper of the kine (Sahadeva).

4. Entry into the Marble Room

(*Sutamati* points out the various heart-warming sights of nature in the garden to *Manimekalai*. Due to the thick foliage of big trees, the place is dark. Birds and beasts sport themselves in gay abandon.

The royal elephant, *Kalavegan*, had been in rut and was now causing fear among *Kaveri-p-poompatti-nam's* festival crowd. On hearing this, the brave Prince *Udayakumaran* rushed to the place and brought the elephant under control. Later he drove through the main streets. On his way he met his friend *Ettikumaran* who was twanging a lute and singing a sad ditty. Questioned, *Ettikumaran* said that he had seen *Manimekalai* walk towards the garden and had been reminded of *Kovalan's* sad fate. *Udayakumaran* who was already in love with *Manimekalai* hastened to the garden to seize her.

Hearing the Prince's chariot-wheels, *Manimekalai* confides to *Sutamati* her fears of a possible kidnap. On the latter's advice she conceals herself in the marble room of the garden. The Prince questions *Sutamati* who replies with words of wisdom. As he listens, the Prince's eyes discover the form of *Manimekalai* inside the luminous room).

"This the grove that seems a retreat to night
Which is pursued by the troops of the Sun's rays;
Here the bees simulate the sounds of flute
While their fledgelings chime like the strings of
  a lute;
No sun comes here, but the cuckoos do;
View the peacocks dance while the monkeys watch!
On the crystalline waters of the lake
With its spread of green leaves and many blooms,
Rises high a large sweet-scented lotus
Where a royal swan holds court observing

A peacock dancing on the banks to sounds
Of water-birds and music of cuckoos
On the tree-branches: look upon all this!
Like your face that has lost its brightness
Due to road dust whirled by moving wagons
These lotuses are dulled by the pollen
That has drifted from those fragrant screw-pines
Which bend as they grow on the banks of the lake!
Watch your rosy hand that stops these bees
Which mistake your face for a lotus!
Such the red fish approaching the lotuses
Efflorescent; at them with wings outspread
The kingfishers swoop in vain. See the sight."
Thus *Sutamati* showed the garden and
The lake to eager *Manimekalai*.
Like a ship whose captain is in deep-fright,
Its mast broken, the knots of sail loosened
And hang awry, its deck splintered all over,
The torn sail swishing, it tosses helpless
All over the sea with no sense of course
Caught as it is in a grim tornado,
The royal elephant *Kalavegan*
Was in rut, the attendants were helpless,
The mahout nowhere; it detersed the blood
That flowed from a facial wound, and traversed
Like a blue mountain walking on the earth,
The King's Way, the main road, the shopping street,
Spreading confusion in *Pukar* city
All over its twin divisions of land,
Not keeping to a course, nor taking rest,
As the keeper, the drummer, birds of prey
And helpless citizens set up a din;
Udayakumaran, son of the King
Whose white umbrella outstrips the sun's sheen,
Galloped hither speedily on his horse
And brought the pachyderm under control.
Accompanied by resplendent soldiers,
The Prince held on to the lovely chariot pole
And appeared to the citizens
Like *Muruga* with the *katampa* garland,

Only, he had a string of *athi* blooms;
In the street where stage actresses live
On the first floor of a golden mansion
At the window nearest to the road
Was *Ettikumaran* in a statuesque pose
Clutching the curved end of a fish-shaped lute
Self-forgotten in the embrace of a maid
With dark tresses, on a flower bedspread;
To him the Prince queried : 'What's thy sorrow
Even when clasped by such a lovely girl?'
Immediately *Ettikumaran*
Went with the maid to the Prince and bowed.
To the King's son with honey-fresh garland
He detailed the source of his recent grief.
"I saw *Madhavi's Manimekalai*
Lustreless as a flower kept within
A pretty box, go towards the garden.
That reminded me of the terrible
Fate which befell *Kovalan;* that sorrow
Led my heart out of tune and my finger
Plucked the wrong string causing me deep distress."
The Prince with the garland was glad at heart.
"I shall place her in my fine chariot
And come hither;" saying so to his friend
He drove his chariot through the main road
Like the moon that cuts across speeding clouds,
And reached the entrance to the flower grove.
As she heard the sounds of the chariot
The maid spoke to her friend in sweet accents:
"I have heard *Vasanthamalai* speak
To *Madhavi* about the desire for me
That has waxed in *Udayakumaran*
With the aid of our *Chitrapati.*
Those sounds of chariot that I hear
Appear to be his: what shall I do?"
Sutamati like a frightened peacock
Asked the maid to enter the marble room,
Conceal herself and keep the bolts well-barred;
Not far away from the room, she stood guard.
The Prince stopped his accompanying friends

And chariot at the gate; like a Sun
Penetrating the grove rich with flowers
He entered and searched with his lotus eyes
The trees around and artificial hills;
Then accosted her: "Why are you here alone?
I know you. Has not your youthful friend
Observed the weight of her breasts on her waist?
Has not her childish prattle given way
To maturity, raising pearl-white teeth?
Do not her long eyes approach her ears
And transcribe the message of cupid's bow?
Why has *Manimekalai* come here
Alone, far away from the hermitage?
Tell me!" The Prince urged the waiting lady.
Sutamati wearing flowers on her hair
And distressed as in an airless dungeon, said:
"What can bejewelled ladies like me tell
Of wisdom, excellence and politics
To the descendant of the King who hid his youth
In garments of old age to pronounce judgement?
Such is my position. Yet shall I speak.
Listen. O Prince whose hand is born to rule!
This body is caused by previous deeds.
It is a field for further *karma;* and
Sans decor, mere meat to be cast off.
Subject to age; receptacle of ills;
Cause of desire; container of misdeeds;
A pit that hides the snake known as anger;
Within it is the heart tossed by sorrow,
Fear, helplessness and an endless pain;
Knowing thus, look close at the inner truth."
Ere her voice of wisdom couched in sweet words
Reached his heart, from within the marble room
Appeared to the prince's roving eyes
The statuesque form of the youthful maid.

Lines 22-23. According to P.V.Somasundaram, this scene where the kingfisher returns to the sky after vainly attempt-

ing to gather the red fish is symbolic of what is to come, i.e., Udayakumaran returning after unsuccessfully attempting to take away Manimekalai forcibly.

Line 39. twin divisions : the two parts of the city distinguished as 'Maruvurpakkam' and 'Pattinappakkam.'

Line 51. The garland made of athi flowers which is the floral insignia of the Chola dynasty.

Line 72. It is now easy to carry away Manimekalai who has come out of the protective walls of her Buddhist nunnery.

Line 79. Maid : Manimekalai
Friend : Sutamati

Lines 109-110. the King : King Karikala "An intricate case had come up to Karikal for decision. His aged ministers appeared anxious about the result. The youthful King understood the meaning of their looks. He retired at once into his private apartments, and there, tied false grey hair on his head, and appeared back in the Court, in the disguise of an old man. Resuming his seat on the throne he examined the parties so skilfully that from their own answers he was able to pronounce a correct judgement, which elicited the applause of his grey-headed ministers." – V.Kanakasabhai, The Tamil Eighteen hundred years ago, p.66.

5. The Manifestation of Goddess Manimekala

(The Prince questions *Sutamati* about *Manimekalai* who stands still within the room and is told that the maid has performed penance and is powerful enough to curse him. Not wishing to rush *Manimekalai*, the Prince asks *Sutamati* about her circumstances. She tells him that as she found refuge in a Jain monastery, her father came in search of her. He too stayed in the city and lived through alms. One day the father was grievously gored by a cow. No one would come to their help, not even the Jain monks. Only a *Buddhist* monk *Sanga Dharma* took pity on them and saved them. From that time she had chosen to remain in the *Buddhist* nunnery. The Prince leaves vowing to find out other means of getting at *Manimekalai*.

Manimekalai comes out of the room and confesses that despite the Prince's referring to her as a courtesan, her heart had sought his company. She is disturbed by such a desire, and tries to banish it. Just then Goddess *Manimekala*, the family deity of *Kovalan* comes into the garden to worship *Buddha's* Feet).

The image of the maid that the Prince saw
Was golden, as if an expert painter
Had on a marble canvas sought to paint
Goddess *Lakshmi* as the killer-beauty;
He felt the aim was to tug at his heart
Through Cupid who has five flower-arrows
And a fish-flag; amazed at the likeness
He soon saw that it was the living maid.
Looking for an entrance he went around
Searching with his hands the walls. Then he to
Sutamati: "Wonderful painting this!
What sort of a person is your friend?"
"Though you are like *Muruga* who destroyed
The Mountain-ogre she will not see you;
Deep is her penance gathered through deeds is
Previous births: she has power to damn.

Not for her the lure of carnal desire."
Such was *Sutamati's* reply to him.
"Can any dam stop floods beyond control?
When desire overflows, where is restraint?
If she is virgin pure, may she be mine!"
Withdrawing with unslaked heart, he added:
"O rosy-hued! people of this city
Refer to you as a pretty girl left
In a Jain retreat by a demi-god;
Why have you forsaken that refuge and
Accompanied the maiden to this grove?"
"Prince with the victory-anklet! Prosper.
May your heart keep away from evil!
O you born to rule this land! Listen to
The cause which brought me here with the lass.
My father who lost his devoted wife
Was an old Brahmin, given to stern fasts,
And fire-rituals which bring us rain.
Pitying me who had transgressed honour
Because of fate, himself of high repute,
He mingled with pilgrims on holy tour
To Comorin and came searching for me.
Reaching the meeting-place of *Kaveri*
And the sea with some Brahmins, he saw me;
"How did you come here, my child?" he cried
Shedding tears over my head; and though
No more was I fit for a Brahmin's home,
Out of love he wished not to forsake me.
He took to begging, going from house to
House in this city -- one day he was gored
By a cow that had but recently calved:
Holding his blood-dripping entrails in hand
Like a garland of red oleanders,
And unable to bear the intense pain
He came in great distress to where I lived
Saying, "O Jains! Help!" But the anchorites
Albeit in saintly dress, denied him help
As a stranger; further, enraged with me
Gestured us to go away: eyes tear-filled,
We walked the streets of house-holders, wailing:

"Are there men of *dharma*? We are helpless!"
Towards us came one used to wandering
Among the sky-rise homes with a begging bowl:
He wore an yellow robe dyed with golden
Maruta flowers: from his face poured grace
As a moon risen when the sun is hottest.
"What afflicts you?" he asked and saw our state.
With his kind words he filled our ears
And thus soothed our hearts. Giving to me
His vessel, he lifted up my father
On his shoulders kindly with both his hands
And led us to a monastery. He
Who saved my father was the holy saint
Sanga Dharma: he taught us the True Way.
Our Lord, Self-taught, the Essence of Faultless things,
Incarnating in nature's several forms,
Always living for the good of others,
Never for himself: for the good of the world
His penance with the ideal of *Dharma*.
Hence his rolling the wheel of *Dharma* Rays.
He won victory over Desire: *Buddha's* Feet
Shall I praise, my tongue shall nought else do.
O Prince! May you prosper!" "Lovely lady
With beautiful speech: I have understood.
There are ways to win *Manimekalai*
With the help of *Chitrapati!"* He said
And tired in spirit, he left the grove.
Opening the marble room, her eyes still
On her cool moon face as if in a trance
Manimekalai with blooms on her hair
Came out and pronounced to *Sutamati:*
"In words censorious he spoke of me
As unchaste, with no penance, unguarded.
A woman for sale, and would possess me.
Yet, my mind followed the stranger's footsteps.
Mother! Is this the nature of desire?
If so, may it be destroyed for ever!"
Just then Goddess *Manimekala* who
Had wished to see the *Indra* festival

In the guise of a lovely *Pukar* maid
Went round the lotus seat in the marble room:
"O Seer! the Pure! the Holy! the Ancient!
How shall I praise thee? As one risen high
Even in this world? Burnt the three sins?
Beyond anger? Foremost in knowledge?
You have defeated desire; you are Joy!
You have purged the enemy, bad conduct.
Lacking a thousand tongues how shall I praise
Thy feet adorned with the thousand-spoked wheel?"
Thus she like a glowing jewelled creeper
Straying alone on earth, stood with her feet
Away from the ground, and prayed in full consciousness:
Pukar damsel's fame is beyond our ken.
The moat with pure water and blooms, her feet.
The songs of birds, her anklet's sweet music.
Her waist-band is the fort-well-bastioned.
The entrance gates are her lofty shoulders.
Twin temples of the Tree and Thunderbolt
Face each other as healthy youthful breasts.
Her auspicious face is *Chola's* palace
Immensely proportioned to last aeons
And well-known in fame all over the world.
While the full moon in the east and
The red sun that speeds to dip in the west
As ear-drops made of silver and gold
Gather brilliance to her faultless face,
As the male swan tears open the lotus
Whose petals have occluded shutting in
His tired beloved, and with her freed
Flies to rest on a coconut palmleaf,
As the female curlew calls out to its mate
To appraise the coming of evensong,
As the large eyed cows that had grazed in fields
On water-lilies among red-footed swans
Now remember their calves and return home
While the oozing milk from their udders settles the dust.

As the Brahmins light vesper's holy fire,
And bejewelled ladies enkindle lamps,
While the strummers twang sweet *marutam*
And flautists choose the *mullai* melody,
Like a daughter who had lost her husband
In the battle returns to natal home,
Grieved by the demise of her Lord, the Sun,
The lady evening, pale all over,
Came to reside in great *Pukar* city.

Line 6. Five flower arrows : the arrows of the Indian Cupid, Kama are made of the flowers Asoka, the blue lily, lotus, mango blossoms and jasmine.

Lines 13-14. The reference is to Lord Muruga (Subramania) who rent in twain a demon in the form of a mountain named Krauncha.

Line 16. Manimekalai's askesis is so pure that she is already capable of cursing the evil-minded.

Line 35. The ravishment of Sutamati by Marutavega is narrated in the earlier canto, 'Entry into the Flower Garden', 11. 28-41.

Line 38. Comorin : The Cape which is the southernmost tip of India where the three oceans meet. It is a holy place for pilgrimage.

Lines 71-78 Sutamati's prayer to Lord Buddha.

Line 77. He won victory over Desire:

When Buddha was performing penance under the Mahabhodhi tree, Mara, the incarnation of Desire, tempted him in several ways; but the Lord overcame

all the temptations and thus Mara had to withdraw, defeated.

Line 91. stranger : Prince Udayakumaran

Lines 98–105. Goddess Manimekala's prayer to Buddha.

Line 100. Three sins : lust, anger and ignorance.

Line 105. The feet that had the sign of a thousand-spoked wheel, betokening spiritual royalty.

Lines 107–108. The feet of the immortals do not touch the earth.

Line 109. Pukar damsel : the city.

Line 110 ff. A magnificent epic simile comparing the city to a youthful maiden. Along with the evening scenes of Nature in its benevolent mood, the closing lines of this canto are among the most lyrical in the epic.

Line 114. Temple of the Kalpa-Taru (Wish-fulfilling Tree) and the Temple of Vajrayudha (Indra's Thunderbolt).

Lines 135–136. Marutam and Mullai are individual modes in the musicology prevalent in ancient Tamil Nadu.

6. The Temple of the Wheel

(After worshipping the Lord's Feet, Goddess *Manimekala* asks *Sutamati* why they are tarrying here. On being told about the Prince's designs, the Goddess suggests that they hide themselves in the Temple of the Wheel nearby and go home at dawn. *Sutamati* wants to know why the Temple is referred to as a cemetery by the common people. The Goddess recounts the story of *Gotamai* whose son had died of fright while walking across the burning-ghat. The mother had called upon Goddess *Sambapathi* to restore her son to life. *Sambapathi* had invoked all the Gods and godheads of the universe to this place to show one's helplessness against the finality of death. Subsequently, the divine architect *Maya* had built the scene of the converging of the gods in terms of a splendorous temple for posterity. *Sutamati* and *Manimekalai* fall asleep. The Goddess carries away *Manimekalai* to a distant island).

As the dark ended, the bright morn arose
And shone effulgent spreading countless rays;
Like the fault of one born in a noble
Family seems extra-offensive,
The moon's dark stain showed up in the clear sky;
But the cool rays of the moon were faultless,
Drizzling here and there in the garden
Like milk flowing from a silver-white pot.
Appearing in a form lightning-bright,
All gorgeous sheen with rainbow colours,
She bowed to the Holy Seat, the Feet of
The First One, the Lord of the *Dharma*-Wheel.
In the figure a *Pukar* damsel
She drew near *Sutamati* and asked:
"Why are you here? What perturbs you both?"
When *Sutamati* spoke of the Prince's words
The Goddess replied: "The King's son has still
Designs on the maid: he went away in peace
Only because this is a sacred grove.

But he will not allow her to escape him
In the road outside. Shun the main pathway
And go through the small gate on the Western
Side of the wall enclosing this garden.
If you reach the Annexe of the Wheel where
Ascetics live in peace, you will be safe
From harm even if it becomes nighttime."
"Apart from the sinister demi-god
Marutavega and your good self,
All the people of this immense city
Call it only a crematorium.
I do not know why you speak of it as
The Annexe of the Wheel. Could you tell me
The inner significance of the term?"
"I will now explain the name's origin.
Listen to me along with *Madhavi's*
Daughter even if it gets dark," she said.
"When famous *Pukar* was built, they structured
A crematorium near this grove.
A gate with representation of gods
Moving around in self-propelled chariots;
A gate with life-like paintings of paddy,
Sugar-cane, lakes of water and gardens;
A gate with spaces all white-washed with lime
But left blank, with no drawings on the walls;
A gate where stood a terrible figure
Mud-baked, its red lips pursed, eyes ferocious,
The hands holding a noose and a trident;
These four gates of a lofty compound wall
Guard the crematory where people go but rarely.
With surrounding trees from where hang the heads
Of dauntless ones who performed self-sacrifice
And a large front with the sacrificial stone
Stands the Temple of the Goddess *Kotravai*.
Be they saints famed for penance, or great Kings,
Or chaste wives who had committed suttee,
Memorial images of burnt clay
Made for them by dear ones according
To the four castes, lay as hills big and small
Forming an enormous cemetery;

Sacrificial pillars to potent gods;
Memorial stones and hangman's junctions;
Resting spaces of cremation-ground keepers
Who guard with stick and cooking pot in hand;
Smoke from burning corpses and livid flames;
Sheds for pyres; such piles everywhere.
Those who burn corpses or leave them unburnt,
Bury them deep or not, or place them in pots;
Day and night the shouts of people busy thus
But none of them has desire to tarry for long.
Funeral drums that sound deep the message
Of mortality to the living ones;
Noisy prayers to deceased ascetics;
Wails from relatives of householders;
The tormenting howls of long-faced jackals;
The hoots of the owls calling out to the dying;
Meat-satisfied voice of the Bird of night;
The cock's screech as it scrapes the scattered brains;
Such the constant noises of the annexe
Rivalling the roar of immense oceans.
The Hall of Sirissa trees flowering
And many-branched, where hungry spirits live
Among trees such as myrobolan, *oduvai*,
Mimosa, *kanrai*, *surai* and the Deadwood.
The Hall of Wood-apple trees where nestle
Birds that have gorged on the flesh of corpses;
The Hall of *Vanni* trees where exorcists
Prepare their arts with unflinching will, cook;
The Hall of Jujube trees where sit men
Stringing immense garlands of human skulls;
The Hall with no trees where people cook
Human flesh in pots for their grisly feast;
All over the place are found pots with fire,
Vessels with *puzhal*, empty biers, knots
Of coins, cast-off garlands, broken casks
Paddy, fried rice, rice as small offering --
This is the expansive cemetery.
Death makes no distinction between god-men,
The rich, post-natal young women, children;
He spares neither the aged, nor the young;

The Terrible Reaper kills large numbers.
Even after watching the fire-mouth
Of the cremation-ground gobbling, people
Drink and dance and live not the dharmic life.
Are there greater fools than these same mortals?
The boy *Samgala* walked here alone
Taking this to be a fortress township.
A corpse lay there asking men understand
That the body is just bone, flesh and blood;
A jackal howled in satiated joy
Biting a lacquer-ornamented foot
Of a corpse covered all over with worms;
A vulture screamed in that space as it pecked
The waist, now no more covered with jewels;
The harsh joy of the dog's bark that had found
A hand with bangles and broke them for bone;
The noise of a kite that feasted rich
On a breast once covered by sandalpaste;
In that stage where bodies of various
Characters burn to ashes, drums resound;
Holding a head trailing dark tresses rose
A devil-woman flashing macabre joy.
No idea she had of cloud or hair,
Fish or eye, flower or nose, lips or petals,
Teeth or pearls; nor did she have compassion;
She gouged out the eyes and ate them. Her forked feet
Marking steps, she danced with devilish glee.
The boy saw this and took great fright. Running
In another direction he called out:
"Mother ! Look ! I have given away my life
To the ghost-crone in the cemetery."
He fell down at his mother's feet and died.
"Woman of ill-luck I am and live with
My sightless husband. Was it sprite or ghost
That devoured the life of my small boy
Without a thought for my sad helpless state?
O *Sambapathi!* Have you no mercy?
Guardian of lakes, halls and ancient trees,
Of households and temples! Come and save me!"
So lamented *Gotamai* at the gate

Of the cremation-ground's fortress, holding
To her breast the life-less form of her son.
The Goddess with golden sheen appeared
And said: "You have called for me at midnight
Stung by deep sorrow in this ghostly place
Which people do not frequent. What ails you?"
"I am a helpless woman. My harmless
Son who went near the cremation-ground
Was deprived of life by a spook or a ghost.
Look at him lying thus as if in sleep!"
"The spook and the ghost never feast on the living.
Clinging to the Brahmin boy's ignorance
Came his past deeds and dealt a fatal blow.
Hence give up your terrible sorrow."
"If you could take my life and spare my boy
He would protect my visionless husband.
Give back his life and gather mine instead!"
The ancient goddess, compassionate,
Said: "Where is the doubt that when life departs
It is born again according to its *karma?*
It is impossible for me to bring
That new life to relieve you. Do not grieve.
There are evil ones who call murder
Dharma: theirs is foolish talk, O woman!
Are there no people to give in exchange
Their lives for the lives of kings? A thousand
Royal head-stones dot this burial ground!
Give up speaking such lacerating words!"
"The four holy scriptures of Brahmins aver
As one that gods give boons unfailingly.
O greatest of gods! If you are not kind
I shall die right here!" said *Gotamai.*
"Without *Brahma* creating living breath
If any other god in this Annexe
Of Wheel gives back a life, I too could do.
Watch the extent of my abilities."
Sambapathi then invoked the four-fold
Formless *Brahmas,* sixteen Creative Lords,
The Sun and the Moon, the shining hosts in
The Six-fold Worlds of the gods, many demons,

The hapless sufferers in infernos
Eight, the countless stars spread over the sky,
Twenty-seven asterisms, planets,
She called these boon-giving denizens of
The Wheel Annexe in front of *Gotamai:*
"Such is her sorrow. Please give her relief,"
She said. Hearing the assembled gods
Express the same view as *Sambapathi*
Gotamai was set free from her distress
And she flung herself upon her son's burning pier.
In that ground where all the godheads had met
By the conurement of *Sambapathi*
Within the Mount Wheel surrounded by sea
Is the central high-rising Meru hill;
Closeby stand the seven temple hillocks;
The four islands vast in their area;
Scattered around are two thousand islets;
These and other things were properly fashioned
In the light of tradition to educate men
By capable *Maya* who made mud shapes
Later kilned to real-life likenesses
Of living things and their dwelling places.
This is known as the Temple of the Wheel.
Because of its nearness to the wall
Of the crematory, people refer to it as
The burning-ghat, this is its history."
As the Goddess spoke with a humble heart
All compassionate, of mortality,
Midnight darkness converged into the grove.
Leaving behind sleeping *Sutamati*
The Goddess *Manimekala* carried
The drowsy maid thirty *yojanas* through the sky
And descended on a southern island,
Manipallavam, begirt by ocean.
Leaving the girl alone, she departed.

The Temple of the Wheel described in Manimekalai's Renunciation is Sathanar's representation of Buddhist cosmology as detailed

by Vasubandhu in Abhidharmakosa and Asanga in Yogacharyabhumi Sastra. At the exact centre of the Chakravala (Wheel) or Cosmos is the mountain Mahameru. Around this mountain are seven circles, i.e., Yugamdhara, Isadhara, Khaditaka, Sudarsana, Asvakarna, Vinataka and Mimimdhara. Between each circle is an ocean. Located in the outermost ocean and outside the seventh circle are the four great continents, one on each side of the world. The whole of the known world is but a part of Jambudvipa which is the great Southern continent. This is known so because this island has plenty of Jambu trees. On each side of these four continents are several small islands.

The Chakravala contains thirty-one worlds which are classified as the region of Desire, the region of Form and the region of Formlessness. In the region of Desire we have eleven worlds (which have their own sub-divisions): of Hell, of Spirits, of Animals, of Mankind, of Asuras, of Heaven of the four great kings, of the Heaven of thirty-three gods, of the Heaven of Yama, of the Heaven of Tusita, of the Heaven of Nirmanarati and the Heaven of Paranirmitavasavarti. In the region of Form we have sixteen worlds containing inhabitants free of desire. These worlds or Heavens are of Brahma's retainers, Brahma's Ministers, Brahma himself, of Lesser Light, of Infinite Light, of Universal Light, Of Lesser Purity, of Infinite Purity, of Universal Purity, of Great Results, of Fortunate Birth, of Passionlessness, of Non-affliction, of Perfect Form, of Perfect Vision and the Heaven Highest. In the region of Formlessness we have four worlds whose inhabitants have neither form nor desire: the Heavens of Boundless Space, of Infinite Consciousness, of Absolute Non-existence and the Heaven of Neither Consciousness nor Unconsciousness.

(For further details see Dr.S.N.Kandaswamy, Buddhism as Expounded in Manimekalai, pp. 204-216).

Lines 3-4. Cf. corruptio optimi pessima, the worst of all is the corruption of the best.

Line 24. The place adjoining the sanctum.

Lines 27-33. This is spoken by Sutamati.

Line 53. Kotravai : the Mother Goddess of ancient

Tamil religious lore.

Line 58. The four castes of priests, warriors, merchants and labourers.

Line 67. These burial pots were known as 'Mudumakkal Tazhi.'

Line 76. The kottan, a species of owl.

Line 93. Puzhal is a kind of sweet.

Line 105 ff. The Goddess gives an account of Sarngala to teach Sutamati and Manimekalai the evil that comes out of ignorance and the inevitability of death.

Line 120 ff. The dance of the spirits feasting over dead bodies is often the subject of extended description in ancient Tamil classics like Kalingathu-p-parani and Thakka-Yaga-p-parani.

Lines 121-124. A dig at the conventional romantic descriptions which find similarity between the fish and the eye, the kumizh flower and the nose, the lips and petals of flowers, and liken teeth to pearls.

Line 142. Goddess with golden sheen : Sambapathi.

Lines 164-166. Even though plenty of people would come forward to sacrifice themselves to bring back to life their King, the feat is impossible. The thousand head-stones in memory of dead Kings are witness to this truth.

Line 176 ff. Four-fold formless Brahmas:

the Arupa Brahmas who inhabit the four worlds, highest in Buddhist cosmology: akasanantyayatana, vijnanantyayatana, akimcanyayatana and naivasamjnansamjnayatana.

The sixteen Creative L Lords:

the Rupa- Brahmas who have form and inhabit the Brahmayika. loka with sixteen heavens: Brahmaparisajjas, Brahma purohitas, Mahabrahmas, Parittabhas, Appamanabhas, Abhassaras, Parittasubhas, Appamanasubhas, Subhakinnas, Vehapphalas, Asannasattas, Abhihas, Atappas, Sudassas, Sudassins and Akanitthas.

Six-fold worlds of gods:

the gods who inhabit Mahayika loka, made of six heavens: Caturmaharajika, Trayastrimsa, Yama, Tushita, Nirmanarati and Paranirmitavasavarti.

Lines 180-181. Infernos eight : Samjiva, Kalasutra, Samghata, Raurava, Maharaurava, Tapana, Pratapana and Avici.

7. Waking

(After depositing *Manimekalai* in *Manipallavam* isle, the Goddess *Manimekala* returns to *Pukar*. She first appears before Prince *Udayakumaran* and advises him not to molest *Manimekalai* who has decided to renounce the world. Proceeding to the Temple of the Wheel, the Goddess wakes up *Sutamati*, asks her not to worry about *Manimekalai* and also comfort *Madhavi*. *Sutamati* is frightened at the turn of events. She is comforted by the Pillar-statue who assures her that she was a sister of *Manimekalai* in the past birth. and will soon he reunited with her. *Sutamati* goes to *Madhavi* and appraises her of what has taken place).

Ever since seeing *Manimekalai*
In the garden, *Udayakumaran*
Was stung by desire and tossed on bed
Waiting for night's end to seize her for himself;
The Goddess *Manimekala*, after
Leaving the maid in *Manipallavam*
Appeared before him and said: "O Prince!
Should royal sceptres bend, planets go awry;
When planets move not proper, no rains fall;
No life can exist when drought stalks the land;
The King loses his potency to guard
The lives of his people as his own self.
Give up this baneful desire for the girl
Consecrated to a life of penance."
The goddess proceeded to the garden
And woke up slumbering *Sutumati*;
"I came to see the festive *Pukar* town.
Do not fear. I am *Manimekala*.
The time has come for the lovely young girl
To tread *Buddha's dharmic* path. Hence did I
Transport the maid by enchantment
To the inviolable *Manipallavam*.
Having learnt well of her previous births
The good virgin would reappear in
This city, in another seven days;

Though she would come in disguise to this rich town
She would certainly reveal herself to you.
From the day she reenters this city,
Many fate-propelled events will occur;
Speak to *Madhavi* about my coming
And of the flawless path chosen by her
Daughter; she will understand my doings.
On the day *Kovalan* named his daughter
After me, speaking about 'the goddess
Who lives in mid-sea,' at midnight I came
To her in a vision and said: 'You have
Given birth to a great saint who will soon
Make Cupid jobless, and destroy sorrows."
Tell her this!" Having spoken, the sublime
Goddess rose in the sky, and went away.
Sutamati rose with a grieving heart.
In the large dancing floors, girls who had danced
With their teachers detailing the poses
For the people's delight, now lay asleep.
With them rested the musical instruments.
The sweet strings of the lute which had joined
Feminine voices expert in music
Now lost their tunes lacking warmth, as girls
Plucked sleepily, their fingers now grown slack.
Piqued by their husbands seeking courtesans,
Red-eyed wives refused to relent even
When they were asked forgiveness, and now slept apart.
Once asleep, they drew close and hugged their men!
Little children with guardian-necklace
Having prattled and spent the day restless
Dragging toy carts, slept in bed tired out.
Their foster-mothers arranged spicy smoke
To keep out the evil eye, and themselves
Settled down in their sleeping mattresses.
Domesticated pigeons, water birds
And fowls in groves drew in their tongues and slept.
Hushed were festival sounds. Drums rested.
Thus the ancient town slept at night.
However, time-keepers in the palace

Watching the water-machine shout the hour;
Pachyderms that refuse food and grow thin
Uncontrollably trumpet in their stables.
Watchmen bang their drums to sound their presence
In main thoroughfares and narrow by-lanes.
Expert builders who build ships in harbours
Wave-battered, grow boozy tippling rice-wine
And croak old-time songs with gay abandon.
Young mothers accompanied by women
Who carry smoking pots of bitter neem
And mustard to keep away evil sprites
Chatter as they go for bathing in ponds.
Though there are no battle-mongering foes,
The King's soldiers heroic like tigers
Offer self-sacrifice, thundering thus:
"May our King be ever-victorious!"
Exorcists shout with voices deep as they
Invite the ghosts of the Hall to partake
Their offerings as to bring relief for
Wives lately brought to bed, little children,
Pregnant women, and men with grievous wounds.
As these and other sounds produced a roar
Sutamati was afraid: through the dark
She of pearly teeth walked and left the garden.
Passing through the gate on the Western wall
She reached the famous Temple of the Wheel
So wondrously described by the goddess.
She went through a commodious portal
And sat in a corner of the Town Hall.
Here on a pillar was a statue
Placed to forecast the future of mortals.
As *Sutamati* drew back dezed by fright
It spoke in a super-human accent.
"O dear daughter of *Ravivarma!*
Wife of *Duhsaya* famed for cavalry!
You died at the feet of an elephant
When you heard of sister *Tarai's* demise.
Kowsika's daughter hailing from *Samba!*
Sutamati who came to this city
With *Marutavega!* You were *Veerai*

Who has once again found *Tarai*. Listen.
On the seventh day from now, at midnight
Your younger sister *Lakshmi* will come
Here with knowledge of your past births.
Do not fear!" Hearing the statue
The good woman's heart beat violently.
The eyes of the night watchmen closed in sleep.
Those who had been slumbering now awoke.
Auspicious right-curling conches sounded loud.
The voices of wise men recited hymns.
Elephants with dotted faces trumpeted.
Cocks with dappled hair crowed aloud.
Horses standing in lines began to neigh.
Birds on tree-branches set up a twitter.
The bees in groves began a cadenced hum.
Bangles in the hands of women tinkled.
Flowers were offered at divine seats for worship.
The shopping-centre was festooned with blooms.
Shops selling musical tools rang with sounds.
Eating places displayed various snacks.
To wake up the city the sun arose
From the sea, ripping the curtain night.
As a peacock stricken by an arrow,
Sutamati walked with paining feet to the city.
As she told *Madhavi* of all that happened
In the night before, the mother was flung
Into great sorrow for the daughter's absence,
As a cobra that had lost its jewel.
As for *Sutamati* who had witnessed
All, she was like a body sans life.

Line 8. Should royal sceptres bend:

the sceptre is a symbol of royal power, raja-dharma. The phrase indicates that should there be any wrong committed by the King, disaster would follow.

Lines 33-34. Kovalan had named his daughter in gratitude to the goddess of the sea who had once saved an ancestor of his from the ocean's wrath.

Line 36. her : Madhavi

Line 65. 'See 'Entry into the Flower Garden', line 138.

water-machine which marks time.

Lines 73-76. Refers to the ancient habit of women bathing at night, ten days after delivering the child.

Line 98 ff. The statue recounts to Sutamati her past birth as Veerai when she was born to King Ravivarma of Yasodhara country. Duhsaya was the King of Anga.

Line 101. Tarai : Madhavi's name in her previous birth.

Line 107. Lakshmi : Manimekalai's name in the previous birth.

Line 111. This indicates the end of the night and the coming of the day.

8. Sorrowing at Manipallavam

(When she wakes up at *Manipallavam*, *Manimekalai* is shocked that she is all alone in an island. Getting no response to her shouts, she is filled with pity for herself and sorrows as memories of *Kovalan* dying in an alien city come crowding upon her. At this moment her eyes fall upon the Seat of *Buddha)*.

Sutamati suffered thus in *Pukar*.
At *Manipallavam* circled by waves
The beach has pans ploughed by conch-varieties
Where grow crops of pearls, garnets lie scattered
Amid sandal trunks thrown inland by the waves.
In low-lying tarns shadowed by tall trees
Various water-lilies interwine,
While bee-sucking blossoms cover the lakes.
The crooked-trunked mastwood and blooming pine
Join together to keep out sunlight.
On the lined moon-white sand's flower-strewn bed
Rose *Manimekalai* from her deep sleep.
Like a life that leaves loving relations
At death, and is born elsewhere, she could see
None of her people, nor her native town.
Strange sights never before seen startled her.
As she gazed at the vast blue from which
Shone the morning sun spreading many rays
She cried: "Is this a corner of the grove?
Sutamati! Where are you? I'm afraid.
Am I awake or asleep? I know not.
My heart is agitated. Please reply.
The night is gone. *Madhavi* will worry.
Come, my friend with bright bangles. Have you
  left me?
Is this the sorcery of the strange girl
Who appeared from nowhere? I don't know.
I'm afraid of being alone. Come!"
On the beach where swimming fowls, flying birds
Swooping beetles and cranes with folded feathers
Are gathered with the swan holding court mid

The multi-coloured birds as courtiers,
On the harbour-banks where the waves beat on
Like enemy forces mid army camps,
On the sand-dunes surrounding the harbour, --
She wandered all over but saw no friend.
Her tresses awry as the flowers fell
She lamented and wailed mournfully.
In that moment of reaching sorrow's depths
She remembered her father and cried out:
"Leaving me to fate which tortures me hither
You went abroad with bejewelled mother
Where your emblazoned breast was pierced
Fatally, O father mine!" The maid wept.
Here was a brilliant shining Seat
Rising from the ground by four feet and half,
Spreading thirteen feet and half on its sides,
Properly sculpted in marble in circle shape
With a lotus square placed on its summit.
Trees would shower nought else but scented
  blooms on it
For it was the Seat of the Righteous One.
Birds would not fly with outspread wings near.
This was the jewelled Seat placed by *Indra*,
Buddha's chair that illumines our past births.
From the East came here two *Naga* kings
At the same time and wished to possess it.
Despite their efforts, they could not move it.
And yet they would not give up their claim.
With reddened eyes and hearts aflame with hate
They were locked in war and their army too.
"Give up your enmity. This is mine."
So saying *Buddha* sat on it and spoke
Of *dharma* to the two kings. This great Seat
Hailed by wise men was now perceived by her.

Line 2. Manipallavam is described as an island said to be thirty yojanas across the sea, south of Pukar.

Line 11.	lined	: marking successive waves according to the tide.
Line 25.	strange girl	: Goddess Manimekala
Line 39.	father	: Kovalan
Line 41.	bejewelled mother	: Kannaki

Line 50. The reference is to the Seat of Buddha. In ancient days these Seats with the impression of Buddha's feet were worshipped by Buddhists. It is also referred to as Dharma Peetikai, Buddha Peetikai and Mamani Peetikai.

9. Recognising the Past

(As soon as *Manimekalai* sees the Seat of *Buddha*, memories of her life past come crowding upon her. She remembers her teacher in that life. He was *Brahmadharma*, the brother-in-law of the *Gandhara* King *Athipathi*. He foretold the destruction of *Athipathi's* land by the ocean's fury. As soon as the populace shifted, the prediction came true. *Manimekalai* then was *Lakshmi*, daughter of *Ravivarma*, the *Yasodhara* King. *Lakshmi* had married *Athipathi's* son *Rahula*. *Brahmadharma* had predicted *Rahula's* death by snake-bite, and this prophecy also came true. *Lakshmi* had then ascended the funeral pyre of *Rahula*).

When she saw the Seat, the maid forgot herself.
Her rosy hands came together in reverence.
With hands clasped in worship above her head
And pearl-like tears falling upon her breasts
She circumambulated thrice right-wards.
As if lightning with clouds had come on earth,
She bent down on the earth straining her waist
And got up, having recognised her birth past.
"Worshipful Holiness! Knower of Truth!
I have now remembered what you told me
At *Kayankarai* as factual truth.
In *Poorvadesa* of *Gandhara* land
Was the ruler *Athipathi* who reigned
In a righteous way: you, *Brahmadharma*,
Were his brother-in-law; to him you went,
Spoke of the *dharmic* path and gave warning.
'This island that is famous for the trees
Bearing sweet jamoon, will, in seven days
Be struck by a quake shaking everyone
O King! Then the four hundred *yojanas*
Of *Naga* land will sink into the deep
And will be destroyed completely. Give up
This place and go elsewhere!' The great King
Made it known to the city residents.
'Remove yourselves with cows and cattle!'

Along with his very large army he
Left the old capital of *Idavayam*
And journeyed to *Avanti* in the North.
On the banks of *Kayankarai* river
In the grove of chey trees he halted.
Idavayam was totally destroyed
Just as you had predicted earlier.
Holy one of faultless wisdom! The King
And his people drew close to your feet,
Bowed and repeatedly praised you.
Taking the *dharmic* vow for the world's good
You spoke then of the unparallelled joy.
Ravivarma, King of *Yasodhara*,
A populated country, had as queen
Amudapathi with red-lacquered feet.
To her was I born and named *Lakshmi*.
The consort of royal *Athipathi*
Was the daughter of *Sridhara*, King of
Siddhipuram, known as *Neelapathi*.
To her was born as a rising sun *Rahula*
Whom I wed. Along with him I came
And bowed at your worshipful feet.
'In another eight days *Rahula* will be bit
By the basilisk: with his dead corpse
You will enter the flames, O lovely girl!
There is nothing more to do for you here.
You will be reborn in gladsome *Pukar*
Named after the daughter of *Kavera*.
When you find yourself in trouble there
Goddess *Manimekala* will appear,
Carry you away from *Pukar* at night
And place you in an island in the South.
See there the Seat on which the Physician
For the disease of birth sat and advised
The *Naga* kings to give up their anger,
Cleansed them of mental ills, closed immoral ears,
And opened them to the soulful listening of *dharma*.
When you bow to it you will recognise
Your past and see the truth of my words'.
Heart saddened by hearing this message

I asked: "'Won't you tell me of my lord's birth?'
'That incandescent Goddess who brings you
Will also tell you of your husband's
New form': such was your message to me.
When will that goddess come to me here?"
Thus the young girl afflicted with grief, wept.

Line 1.	Seat	: The Seat of Buddha.
Line 9 ff.	Addressed to Brahma dharma who had taught Manimekalai the True Way in her last birth. The power of the Seat enables her to watch her past as happening before her once again.	
Line 11.	Kayankarai	: a river.
Line 12.	Poorvadesa	: a country in the East.
Line 49.	basilisk	: a legendary snake whose mere glance is said to be fatal.
Line 53.	daughter of Kavera	: the river Kaveri.
Lines 60-61.	See 'Sorrowing at Manipallavam,' 11. 54-62.	
Line 66.	My lord	: Rahula, Manimekalai's husband in the previous birth.
Line 67.	incandescent goddess	: Goddess Manimekala

10. Incantations Bestowed

(The Goddess *Manimekala* returns to *Manipallavam* and offers worship at the Seat of the *Buddha*. *Manimekalai* asks the goddess to tell her more about *Rahula*. The Goddess obliges. Once *Rahula* was sporting with *Lakshmi* when a *Buddhist* sage happened to come there. *Rahula* was impatient with the disturbance but *Lakshmi* told him not to be rude to elders. She brought cool water and food for the sage. Because of this good act *Manimekalai* will attain Release at the proper time. *Rahula* is now born as *Udayakumaran*. But *Manimekalai* is a precious seed and should not be wasted in the desert of carnal desire. That is why the Goddess had brought her away. *Madhavi* and *Sutamati* were Lakshmi's elder sisters in the earlier birth. They had married *Duhsaya* and had been taught the True Way by the saint *Aravana*. Since knowledge is important to gain true wisdom, the Goddess directs the maid to learn more about other philosophies. To enable her to do so, the Goddess teaches her three incantations. They would enable her to travel by air, change her form and go without food).

"The virgin has recognised her past births
And is blessed," thought *Manimekala*.
Holding scented flowers she descended
On the earth as a creeper in full bloom
And began praying to the Holy Seat
In words heard by her who had learnt her past.
"Humanity had lost its *dharmic* sense,
Its ears denying righteous advice.
To inject good mid moral poverty
Where no lamp shone to show the *dharmic* way
You were born as the lovely morning sun.
I bow at your feet. I bless this Seat
Meant for you as your own gracious form.
I hold your holy feet on my head.
I place flowers in worship. Guard me from
Sorrows;" thus the Goddess worshipped the Seat.

To her bowed the maid creeper-like on earth.
"By your grace I know of my past birth.
Where is my noble husband?" she inquired.
"Listen, *Lakshmi*. Once you were upset with
Rahula in the garden. With desire
Overwhelming, he sought to quieten you
By worshipping your flower-soft feet.
The pure *Sadhuchakra* was then moving
In the sky on his way back from the isle
Of Gem whither he had turned the *Dharma* Wheel.
At mid-day he descended into the
Garden. Seeing him you were quite abashed.
O gentle girl, your body shuddered.
Your waist drooping, you bowed before him.
Rahula snapped in anger: 'Who's that?'
You hastily covered his lips saying:
'Instead of paying respect to this saint
Why will you shout?' And along with the prince
You bowed to him who belonged to *Buddha*.
'Immortal being! We mayn't belong to you.
Yet we shall bring sweet water and good food.
Kindly accept. We shall do as you wish.'
'Mother, I shall eat. Bring here,' he said.
The good that happened on the day he ate
Has followed you and will give you release.
Udayakumaran who approached you
In the garden was once Prince *Rahula*.
He had loved you deeply and you too had
A strongly winding affection for him.
I thought a seed of *dharma* like you
Could be wasted in desire like the seed
Of *kandasali* in salty soil.
To make your life purposeful have I acted.
O *Lakshmi!* Hear. *Tarai* and *Veerai*
Were your elder sisters in the past birth.
Duhsayan, with victory anklets,
Who ruled the *Kachcha* principality
In *Anga* land, married the two sisters.
Once he had gone with them to sport among
Hills, and reached the banks of flowing Ganges.

The wise and sinless saint *Aravana*
Went to the same place. *Duhsaya* got up:
'Who may you be?' he enquired and at once.
Bowed at the feet of the austere one.
'The Primal One, Ruler of the *Dharma*-Wheel
Sought to release people from their sorrows
And chase away the spectre of hatred
For uniting human beings in love
By speaking from this place in days of yore.
On this hill lie the impression of his
Lotus feet. For this reason people named
It the divine hill of the lotus feet.
I came to worship and go round the Seat.
You good people! Join me in worship.'
Assenting to his welcome words, they went
And saluted with hands the divine Seat.
Hence as *Madhavi* and *Sutamati*
Were they born and rejoined you, O maid!
You have learnt of your past and the Way.
You must listen to the teachings of others now.
O sweet girl! On the day when you seek out
The religious knowledge of other sects
The preceptors may not give you guidance
As you are young and bejewelled. Take this
Incantation to change form, and move in
The skies." And the goddess taught her the chants.
"Know that I wish you to follow the Way
Of the *Buddha* who rejected worldly joy
And attained knowledge on the Full Moon night.
Worship this Seat which is beyond compare
And return to your city." Rising
She came down again to say: "I forgot.
O maid following a great ideal!
The human body is a mass of food.
This great chant will release you from hunger."
Teaching her the third incantation also
The magnanimous goddess then left the place.

Line 1. virgin : Manimekalai

Line 6.	her	: Manimekalai
Line 11.	you	: Lord Buddha
Line 20.	Lakshmi	: Manimekalai's name in the previous birth.
Line 24.	Sadhu-chakra	: one who belongs to the circle of saints.

Lines 24-26. It is said that Buddhist saints who have attained siddhi, have the ability to fly in the air to enable them to visit holy places dedicated to Buddha.

Line 26.	Dharma-Wheel	: Refers to the habit of Buddhist monks holding in their right hand a wheel on which is imprinted the incantation, 'Om Mane Padme Hum.' They keep whirling it either repeating the incantation or in silence.
Line 36.	we	: Lakshmi and Rahula

Line 48. Kandasali, a variety of paddy that has sweet scent and is of a superior variety.

11. Receiving the Vessel

(*Dipatilakai*, the goddess guarding *Manipallavam* appears before *Manimekalai* and learns about her. She herself has come recently from *Ratnadvipa* after worshipping the Feet of *Buddha* impressed upon the *Samanoli* Mountain. She tells *Manimekalai* that after *Aaputhran* placed the *Amuda Surabhi* in the *Gomukhi* lake, the vessel has been surfacing on the birth anniversary of the *Buddha*. Once again the time has come. *Manimekalai* is the right person to take charge of it. The maid receives the vessel and praises the Lord *Buddha*. *Dipatilakai* speaks of the evils of hunger and asks the maid to relieve hungry people of this dire distress. *Manimekalai* returns to *Pukar* by air and salutes *Madhavi* and *Sutamati*. The three women prepare to go and meet the Saint *Aravana*).

When goddess *Manimekala* withdrew
Manimekalai went around watching
The white sand-dunes and flowering gardens,
And water lakes in *Manipallavam*
For a league: there appeared in holy
Vestments the goddess *Dipatilakai*.
She asked: "Bejewelled lady! Who are you
Who have come here as from a sunken ship?"
"You ask me 'who are you.' But in which birth,
Golden lady? Listen to me with care.
In my past birth I was *Rahula's* wife
Lakshmi: at present *Manimekalai*,
The daughter of the danseuse, *Madhavi*.
The good goddess whose name I bear brought me
To this island where on beholding
The seat I recognised my births in the past.
Such my coming hither and my knowledge.
Lovely creeper-like lady! Who are you?"
Coming to know of the maid's full knowledge
Dipatilakai spoke purposeful words.
"Nearby is the Isle of Gem in which
Rises high the Hill of *Samantaka*.

The feet of the Lord who stood by *dharma*
Are impressed on its top and appear
As a boat to help us cross the sea of birth.
I have just come after worshipping there.
By the orders of *Indra*, the lord of gods,
I guard this blameless and auspicious Seat.
My name is *Dipatilakai*. Listen.
Only those who follow the *dharmic* way
Peerless, as taught by the great *Buddha*
Are worthy of bowing to this Seat.
Presently they learn about their past births.
Such beings are rare; to them is vouchsafed
The teaching of *dharma*. Listen, O maid
Who are such a one in this world!
The water-filled lake that fronts the great Seat
Is *Gomukhi* always carpeted with
Large lilies, dark-blue and pearl-white.
In summer-time during *Vaikasi* month,
Right on the star that is counted fourteenth,
Which is the centre of stars twenty-seven
And is the birth star of my Lord *Buddha*,
Amuda Surabhi of *Aaputhran*,
The peerless vessel, becomes visible.
Today is that star. The time is near.
O maid! The vessel is coming to you.
Life-giving food placed in it will increase
And never cease, though the hands that receive
May grow tired. Such is its uniqueness.
Learn from *Aravana* of your city
The history of the vessel, O maid!"
Hearing her, the young girl assented.
After worshipping the glorious Seat
She walked with goddess *Dipatilakai*,
Went round the *Gomukhi* lake and waited.
The vessel worthy of worship then rose
And reached the hands of the girl standing there.
The bejwelled maid was overjoyed
By the gift of the vessel and exclaimed:
"O Hero who has defeated Cupid!
One who chased away the enemies of life!

Striving ever for the good of others,
You have denied for yourself the heavens.
The state far beyond the reach of man's mind
Is yours: you give us the wisdom-sight.
Your ears are deaf to evil speech.
Your tongue is blessed with uttering truth.
You walk among the sinful to save them.
By you the snakedom was freed from fear.
I can but bow to thy blessed feet twain
But have no ability to praise you!"
Dipatilakai also joined her
And praised the Feet of the Lord seen under
The *Bodhi* Tree for the good of the world, and said:
"The evil that hunger is, destroys noble birth.
It kills the good nature of those high-born;
Divorces them from the staff of knowledge.
Makes them shameless and strangers to beauty.
Drags them to the streets along with their wives;
I have no words to praise the fame of those
Good people who cause its destruction.
A time was when grass and tree charred smoking,
Rains failed, and people died everywhere.
Giving up his kingdom, the holy Brahmin
Wandered all over the world helplessly
Finding no way to appease his hunger.
Ere he stooped to consume dog's meat
He offered thanks giving to God *Indra:*
That Lord of Immortals appeared,
Brought rains, foodgrains plenty and thus saved
lives.
Charity to people who can pay back
Is mere trade: the lives of only those
Who save the helpless from hunger, are blessed.
They who give nourishment to living beings
In this world, give precious life itself.
You have taken the vow of saving lives.
Surely a peerless *dharmic* path!"
"In my past birth my beloved husband
Was fatally bit by a snake. As I
Entered the fire and my senses were clouding

I had a vision of *Sadhuchakra*
Who had once appeared to me at noon
And I had had the fortune of feeding him.
Perhaps as a result, this good vessel
Like life-giving medicine has reached me.
In this enormous island of *Jambu*
There are homes prosperous due to good deeds
In the past: at their entrance stand many
Wearing rags, suffering pangs of hunger,
Unmindful of heat, daring heavy rains,
Loaded with sorrows innumerable
Due to their ways of evil in the past:
This magic vessel acts through the heart
As the breast of a mother when she yields
Sweet milk out of love for her new-born babe.
I wish to see this vessel gush forth food
For those poor people in like manner."
The goddess said: "I forgot one point.
Your words remind me. It will give food
Only for those who unselfishly serve
Others: *Dharma* is its witness. You know
All about it. Return now to your city."
Bowing to *Dipatilakai*, holding
The precious utensil in her hands,
And after worshipping the great Lord's Seat,
Manimekalai soared towards the sky.
"The seventh day foretold by the goddess
Has come. But not my daughter. Can the words
Of the divine be wrong?" So *Madhavi* pined.
Removing her worry, the maid appeared
And spoke to them wonderful tidings.
"O superb daughter of *Ravivarma!*
Wife of *Duhsaya* famed for his cavalry!
You were born as *Tarai* and *Veerai* to
Amutapathi, and were my elders.
Now my mothers! I bow at your feet.
To be freed from the sins of mortal birth
And escape the stranglehold of *karma*
Seek the sage *Aravana* to grant you
Illumination. He will tell you all.

This is holy *Amuda Surabhi*
Once the vessel of *Aaputhran:* worship it."
They bowed and praised the holy vessel.
"Come, let's to the blameless austere saint,"
The maid said, and together they all went.

Line 6.	Dipa-tilakai	: Guardian Goddess in charge of the Lotus Seat of Buddha.
Line 14.	good goddess	: Goddess Manimekala.
Line 19.	full knowledge	: Knowledge of past births.
Line 21.	Isle of Gem	: Ratnadvipa or Ceylon.
Line 22.	Hill of Samantaka	: Also known as Samanoli, the highest mountain in Ceylon, now called 'Adam's Peak.'

Lines 41-42. Refers to the 14th lunar asterism.

Line 51.	Aravana	: Madhavi's presceptor.

Line 61 ff. Addressed to Buddha

Line 64. Buddha's ideal was Nirvana and hence he rejected life in heaven that is impermanent, as one can stay in heaven only as long as one's good deeds give the privilege.

Line 70. Refers to the Jataka tale which speaks of Buddha's teaching the way of compassion to Garuda who was the cause of terror for the race of snakes. He made Garuda give them nectar as well.

Line 85.	holy Brahmin	: sage Viswamitra
Line 132.	them	: Madhavi and Sutamati.

12. Worshipping Saint Aravana

(Manimekalai, along with *Madhavi and Sutamati,* meets *Aravana* at his retreat and acquaints him of her adventures so far. Saint *Aravana* tells them that he had met *Duhsaya* who lamented that his wives, *Tarai* and *Veerai,* had died. Now the ladies had taken another birth and come to him as *Madhavi* and *Sutamati* like dancers who have changed their dress. It is true *Buddha* had incarnated and shown the Right Way. But due to human lassitude, the Truth had become hidden. The gods would request *Buddha* to re-incarnate. He will do so, and then once again the world will be rid of all ills. Saint *Aravana* then proceeds to explain to her the One Supreme Law: Curing the Disease of Hunger).

Along with them, the girl enquired of people:
"Where stays the holy *Aravana?"*
Reaching the retreat of the ancient
Grey teacher who yet spoke in firm accents,
The dark-haired virgin bowed at his feet thrice
And worshipped him in the time-honoured way.
She spoke of her visit to the grove to him
And *Udayakumaran's* words.
How Goddess *Manimekala* took her
And left her in *Manipallavam.*
Whither the Seat of the Enlightened One
Revealed to her all about her births past;
How the goddess unveiled the truth about
The maid's husband in an earlier birth.
"Your sisters *Tarai* and *Veerai*
Were enveloped by a dire fate
And have now joined you as *Madhavi*
And *Sutamati:* go now and request
The Saint *Aravana* about the ways
In which they can get illumination;"
Thus the goddess had spoken and given her
Three incantations: after her going,

Dipatilakai had come in a flash
And approached her with loving kindness;
She had helped the maid to gather at once
The blessed vessel of kind *Aaputhran;*
That lightning-bright divine lady had asked
Her to learn of *Aaputhran* from the saint;
Set on her way thus, she had come here
To the sage: such was the maid's true story.
When the wise teacher had listened to
Manimekalai, he was overjoyed.
"May the good in this golden girl increase!
Learn from me the histories of these two;
As the goddess told you, I was on that day
Returning after worshipping the Seat
Of bond-destroying *Buddha's* Feet.
On my way was a lovely garden where
Duhsaya of *Kachaya* country was seen.
'King with an immense cavalry power!
Are you and your two wives keeping well?'
I asked: heart-breakingly he lamented
About the tragedy that befell them;
Veerai had gone in a drunken stupor
Close to an untamed elephant and was killed;
Tarai flung herself from the balcony
When she heard the dire news, and died too.
As the king spoke to me of his sorrows
I took leave saying it is past *Karma*.
Sorrow not. Have you come as dancers do
In a different dress?" He spoke to them
In the presence of *Manimekalai*
Of their births past and continued further:
"Thanks to your good deeds in the births past
You have learnt of your yesterdays and *Dharma*.
Buddha embodying *Dharma* taught us
Righteous living; but it prospered not
And the way to liberation was barred
By grass and thorns; the path of sin leading to evil
Is open, traversed by ignorant men,
As if that leads us to the *dharmic* goal.
We have to recognise the russet sun

Which remains inclosed in layers of dew.
It cannot be easily seen with eyes.
The vast sheet of ocean-water cannot
Go through the wire-pierced hole in the gem.
But as the tiny droplets of water
Which drip through, it is as yet possible
To gain *dharma* in this world: mark my words.
Wrapt in ignorance, men hear me not.
All the godheads of the Temple of the Wheel
Hastened to the *Tushitaloka* where they
Bowed to the Lord in aspiration;
In reply, like a Sun with many rays
Appearing on a world of darkness,
The Wise One will incarnate after
A thousand and six hundred and sixteen
Years: then will the teaching of *dharma*
Stream as through a canal into a large
Lake, pass through the small ear-holes of men
Beneficent wisdom, bestowing joy.
When the sun rises, the sun-stone reflects
Brilliant sunlight; unlit minds of men
Will receive the true illumination
When the Sun of *Buddha* reveals himself.
Then will the moon and the sun shine faultless
And the planets keep an unfailing course;
Rains will not fail; earth would be prosperous,
Living things will have nothing to fear;
Breeze will blow right-ward, mountains will prosper;
The oceans bestow worthy goods to men;
The cows will pour milk for calves and people;
The birds having plenty, will not desert;
Sentient creatures live in amity;
Peace will come to the restless spirits of the dead;
Mankind will have no deformed men or dwarfs,
No dumb or deaf, no morons nor nitwits;
They who are born when he incarnates
And listen to him, gain liberation;
Each of my births shall I spend in praising
The feet of the Lord beneath the *Bodhi*
Tree, O blessed being among women!

There are going to be omens about
Happenings in this city, concerning you.
Until after the events occur
You will not benefit by *dharmic* teaching.
These two ladies had worhshipped the great Seat
Of the Primal Lord's lotus feet in the past.
Hence O maid! they in your company
Will worship the holy feet of the *Buddha*
Circumambulate the Seat and thereby
Get released from the bonds of shadowing
Karma, and reach faultless Righteousness.
You have received the life-giving vessel,
Valuable *Amuda Surabhi;*
I shall speak to you of the One Law
Which is common to men and gods: that is
'Curing the disease of hunger;' thus spake
The venerable sage in words of wisdom.
So inspired, the maid lifted the vessel
To rid the world of the flames of hunger.

Line 1. them : Madhavi and Sutamati
girl : Manimekalai

Line 4. Although greatly advanced in age, with grey hair, Aravana spoke clearly and with significance.

Line 14. the maid's husband : Rahulan

Lines 50–51. Addressed to the ladies together.

Line 72. Tushitaloka : one of the six worlds of devas in the Chakravala, the Buddhist cosmos.

Lines 76–78. Scholars have not been able to establish the time referred to in these lines. However, they obviously refer to a future incarnation of the Buddha.

Line 93. Birds will not need to migrate across long distances in search of water.

13. The Life of Aaputhran

(Saint *Aravana* begins recounting the story of *Aaputhran*. *Sali*, the wife of *Apanjika*, a brahmin of *Varanasi*, took to adultery and became pregnant. She left for Cape Comorin. On the way *Aaputhran* was born. She abandoned the baby and went away. A cow guarded him until the brahmin *Ilamputhi* took him home and brought him up. When grown to manhood, he released a sacrificial cow out of pity and moved out of the village. The Brahmins caught him and beat him up. The cow gored the leader of the brahmins and ran away. The brahmins jeered at *Aaputhran* when he tried to speak of cow-sacrifice as folly. One of the brahmins then said that he had met *Sali* recently and had learnt of *Aaputhran's* ignominious birth. At this, even *Ilamputhi* spurned the boy. *Aaputhran* went to *Maturai* and stayed in the temple of *Chinta Devi*. He begged for his food at day time, shared it with helpless and sick beggars, and slept in the temple at night).

"Hearken to the life of *Aaputhran*
Who gave the great vessel to gentle you.
In *Varanasi* lived a brahmin
Apanjika, teacher of the scriptures.
His wife *Sali* became adulterous.
Afraid of the evil to her husband
She left for Cape Comorin in the South.
Her time nearing, she was delivered
Of a child at night, near a village.
Heartless, she abandoned it in grove.
Hearkening to its cries, there came a cow,
Comforted it by licking it all over
And gushed forth its milk for seven days
To assuage the orphaned babe's hunger.
Passing by the garden was a brahmin,
Ilamputhi of *Vayanankatu*
Who heard the pitiful cry of the child
And lifted it up, his eyes tearful.

'Not a cow's child but mine own!'; so laying
He prayed with his wife and took charge of the
babe.
'A son is born to us. May our
Tribe increase!' the couple exclaimed and went.
Ere the boy was given the holy thread
The brahmin taught him well all the scriptures.
With a firmness of intelligence
The boy learnt all the ways of the brahmins.
One day he strayed into a neighbouring
Brahmin home: he saw there sacrificial objects.
A colourful flower string around its horns,
Afraid of assault stood a cow
Mooing piteously, in deep fear
Like a deer caught in the fatal net,
Afraid of the arrow from pitiless hunters.
His heart shocked, the boy shed copious tears.
'I shall free this cow from fear. And so
I shall steal it and go away at night.'
With this thought he stood aside in hiding.
At night he left the place with the cow
And trudged pathways cobbled with sharp stones.
The brahmins and the guardians of the law
Began searching and caught him with the cow.
'You are no low-caste to steal the sacred
Cow for this desert path. Tell us the truth.
Untouchable wretch! You will be kicked out!'
So saying they beat him up mercilessly
With sticks; angered, the cow gored the teacher
Among them whose entrails came tumbling out,
And it ran away fast into the woods.
Aaputhran spoke to those assembled there:
'Do not torture others: listen to me.
Grazing in fields set apart for farming
The cow gives sweet and health-increasing milk
With loving kindness to people in this
Wide world from the very day they are born.
What have you against this creature? Tell me,
O brahmins versed in ancient scriptures!'
'In ignorance have you sought to deride

The scriptures vouchsafed to us by the son
Of Him who holds the triumphant golden disc;
Frailty is your heart, and rightly are
You known as a cow's son; never can you
Be a brahmin's son!' they jeered wildly.
'*Achala* was cow's son; *Sringi*, a deer's;
A tiger's offspring, *Virinchi;* was not
Famous *Kesakambala* a jackal's son?
When you give plentiful praise to these saints
As the progenitors of your caste,
Where is stain for the caste traced to a cow,
O beings, well read in the Vedas?'
The boy said. One of the brahmins then spoke.
'I know of this boy's birth: coming across
A travel-weary brahmin lady,
Sali by name, who was returning from
Kumari-pilgrimage all by herself
I asked her: 'Which is your native place?
Whence your coming here?' That housewife
Gave expression to her tale of sadness.
'I was the wife of a Vedic teacher,
A leading brahmin of *Varanasi*.
Taking to evil ways un-brahminic,
I became adulterous, lost my husband.
Afraid of torture by my caste-people
I joined some pilgrims to *Kumari*.
While close to a cowherd village away
From *Korkai* city of King *Cheliyan*,
I was delivered of a child. Heartless,
I left it in a grove close-by and came away.
Where is deliverance for this evil woman?'
She wept. This is the son of that lady.
As it served no purpose, I kept silent.
Do not touch him. He belongs to low caste.'
Aaputhran gently smiled, full of meaning:
'Listen to the origins of brahmins;
The first two noble teachers of the Vedas
Were the offspring of a dancing girl
Who appeared before the Creator.
Men with sacred thread! Can you deny this?

Then how can *Sali* be blamed?' he replied
And stood laughing at the Vedic brahmins.
His father, *Bhuti*, denied him entry.
'This lad is unworthy for brahmin homes.'
When the boy begged for food in the village
The brahmins filled his pot with stones: 'You cow-thief!
The boy journeyed to *Maturai* in the South
Filled with people, rich beyond compare.
There in the temple of *Chinta Devi*
Built with superb artistry, the boy stayed
Keeping to the front hall: he would go out
With his begging bowl into the city
And make rounds of the charitable homes.
Then call out to 'the blind, the deaf, the lame,
The helpless and those struggling with sickness,'
Feed them with love, and himself eat the left overs.
Later, sleep with the vessel as a head-rest
Such was the life of *dharma's* guardian.

Line 1. Aaputhran : literally, son of a cow (Tamil aa: a cow)

Line 2. gentle you : Manimekalai

Line 23. The holy thread is given to brahmin children when they are seven years old. The anxiety of Ilamputhi to make Aaputhran a scholar and the latter's precocity at learning the scriptures at a very tender age are indicated by this line.

Line 30. Afraid of injury : the cow had sensed that it was meant for ritual sacrifice.

Line 58. son : Brahma

Line 59. Lord Vishnu

Line 63.	Achala	: a legendary character
	Sringi	: son of Rishi Sameeka and a doe.
Line 64.	Virinchi	: a sage
Line 65.	These are references to Saint Achitakesakambala in Buddhist texts (U.V.S. Iyer's Manimekalai, p.147).	
Line 85.	Korkai	: the ancient capital of the Pandyas.
Line 94.	Vasishta and Agastya	
Line 95.	dancing girl	: the celestial danseuse, Tilottama .
Line 96.	Creator	: Brahma
Line 116.	Chinta Devi	: Goddess. Saraswati

14. On the Nature of the Vessel

(Saint *Aravana* continues *Aaputhran's* story. Once travellers came late at night to the temple and begged *Aaputhran* for food. He had nothing left with him and was sad. Goddess *Chinta Devi* appeared to him and gave him a divine vessel which could produce unlimited food. As *Aaputhran* performed charity with the help of this vessel, Lord *Indra* came to the earth and offered him boons. *Aaputhran* was satisfied with the work he was doing for the poor, and spurned *Indra's* offer. The god grew angry and sent copious rains down. There was now plenty everywhere and no one needed *Aaputhran's* charity. He journeyed to *Savaka* to help the people there for the country was suffering from drought. On the way, he was left alone in the *Manipallavam* island. Instead of keeping himself alive with the help of the vessel, he placed it in the *Gomukhi* lake and passed away. Just before his death, he had related his life's events to Saint *Aravana).*

"In that Hall one day a precious vessel
Was given to him. Listen, O good maid!
It was rainy season and dark midnight.
A few travel-weary people came
To the Hall, and woke up the sleeping lad.
'We suffer pangs of hunger,' they complained.
Except for what he begged, he saved no grain
And hence unable to feed them, he grew sad.
Listen, girl! May your evil depart!
The Goddess who is the light of wisdom
Of the artistic temple whom all worship
Appeared saying: 'Be done with your grief!
My boy, get up and receive this vessel.
Even if drought stalk the land, this bowl
Will not become empty: the receiving hand
May grow tired but the bowl will not lack.'
She then gave him the vessel in her hand.
'Goddess of Wisdom! The light eternal
Of this temple of art! Divine Knowledge!

Leader of gods! First among earth's people!
Remove the sufferings of these men!' He prayed
Bowing and worshipping the Goddess.
He then assuaged the hunger of the men.
From now on he saved lives by giving food.
Men and animals and birds came as groups
And gathered round him. Their noises loudly
Resounded throughout as when birds gather
On a tree laden with fruit.
This deed of *dharma* caused the shaking up
Of the white Seat of immortal *Indra*.
Taking the form of an old brahmin, --
Bent back, unsteady steps, walking stick in hand—
He appeared before the Saviour.
'I am *Indra*. What is your will?
Ask of me gifts as return for your charity.'
Like an innocent the lad laughed loudly
As if in derision, he would have him gone.
'The gods only know how to enjoy
In heaven, the results of earthly action.
O powerful King who is the lord of
Heaven where there are no austere saints,
Or charitable men guarding the helpless
Or people striving for liberation!
My divine vessel can remove hunger
And bring joy to pain-racked visages.
What else will the Lord of Gods give me --
Food to eat and clothes to wear, or maidens
Or anyone else to guard me safe?'
'While the Saviour's vessel creates food
Let there be none to receive from it.
Let there be plenty all over the world.
May the heavy rains bring prosperity.'
Such was *Indra's* reaction to the lad
And this brought plentiful bounty to earth.
For twelve years the *Pandyan* country
Had lost lives due to lack of showers.
Now the rains came and crops waxed rich.
As people forgot what dread hunger was,
The temple Hall where the kind One lived

Grew a stranger to the sounds of eating.
Amorous men, maniacs and rejects,
And those on pleasure trips gathered laughing
To play marbles and dice, speak scandal,
Marking a life devoid of all wants.
Aaputhran removed himself from the Hall
And went in search of people needing help.
'Who's this?' the public jeered at him.
As there was none to recognise his worth
Whose loving kindness had sought to serve men,
He walked all alone like a rich man
Whose wealth had all been lost in the sea.
To him who was thus walking all alone
A few men who came hither in a ship
Made obeisance and said: 'In *Savaka*
Land, rains have failed and countless lives are lost.
'Methinks I should go there with my vessel
Which is now fruitless as a spinister
Lacking poor people to feed due to *Indra's* ire.'
He happily joined the mariners.
One day the ocean was churned by a storm.
The ship tarried at *Manipallavam*
For a day. *Aaputhran* disembarked for a change.
Thinking that he had got back to the ship,
The vessel sailed away in the dark night.
Saddened by the ship's abandoning him
And as there was none in that vast island
He mused: 'This bowl was meant to save people.
I will not use it just to save my life.
The effects of my past good deeds are gone.
Why should I carry the bowl when alone?'
He placed it in a lake of pure water,
Gomukhi: 'Appear annually once.
Enter the hands of one who takes the vow
Of bringing succour to the helpless!'
He said, gave up food and prepared for death.
It was then that I went to him and asked:
'What ails thee?' He described to me all that
Had happened in his adventurous life.
As the sun that rises in the East

Destroying night, and then sinks in the West.
He left his body in *Manipallavam*.
Desiring to be guardian of lives
He was born to a cow belonging
To *Bhumichandra*, King of *Savaka*.

Line 1. Hall : in the temple of Chinta Devi

Line 7. he saved no grain : he did not keep anything aside with him for the morrow

Line 10. Goddess Saraswati.

Lines 29-30. It is an ancient belief that if there is a Buddhist who is incomparable in compassion and conduct, the Seat of Indra would shiver, thus signalling Indra to go to the earth and offer the person boons.

Line 33. Saviour : Aaputhran

Line 49. Indra's reaction to what he thought was a slight done to him by Aaputhran.

Line 59. the Kind One : Aaputhran.

Line 74. Savaka : identified with modern Java.

Line 90. I : Saint Aravana

Lines 102-104 He was born in Savaka as his last thoughts were for the suffering citizenry of Savaka.

15. Begging with the Bowl

(Saint *Aravana* continues with the story of *Aaputhran*. *Aaputhran* was reborn on *Buddha's* birthday to a cow cherished by saint *Manmugan* of *Savaka*. The earth was immediately blessed with a renaissance. The childless King of *Savaka*, *Bhumichandra*, took the child from *Manmugan* as a gift and brought him up in the palace. The child grew into the good Prince *Punyaraja* and succeeded *Bhumichandra*. Saint *Aravana* asks *Manimekalai* to aid the victims of hunger with the help of the vessel. The maid takes leave of him and goes out into the street. The citizens comment that it was a pity the object of a Prince's attentions should become a beggar. But *Manimekalai* is happy with her role. A *Vidhyadhara* woman, *Kayachantikai*, tells her that she should beg first from a chaste woman. *Kayachantikai*, herself is afflicted with the disease of endless hunger.)

"Hear more of this, O creeper-like girl!
The cow that had suckled him in the past
Reached in its next birth the Saint *Manmugan*
Living on the snow-clad *Savaka* hills.
It had golden horns and hooves, and was praised
By everyone for its good nature.
Even before calving, milk flowed from it
With which it fed those around. The great saint
Who could read the past, present and future
Said: "Within its womb will incarnate
A saviour, causing plentiful rains
Who will guard all living things. Nor will he
Be born circled by umbilical chord
But will come out of a golden egg.'
Even when not assailed by suffering
Aaputhran cast off his body in the island
To perform *dharma;* as he didn't forget
The cow that saved him, he was born to a cow
Making gods happy, a hero in all
This vast island which has sweet *jambu* fruits.

Thus he took birth and the world worshipped him.
Listen to the Saviour's coming!
In summer when the sun is at the hottest,
Under the fourteenth star which is at the centre
Of the whole number, like unto *Buddha*
Whose birth star it was, the Kind One took birth.
The rains came down all over the world
And the torrents carried flower-petals;
'The season is like unto the sacred
Hour when *Buddha* was born. Marvellous!'
So said the holy men performing
Austerities in the Temple of the Wheel.
They went to the image of the goddess
At midnight saying: 'If the goddess is pleased
We would know the truth.' From her came the words:
'He who had died at *Manipallavam*
Is born in *Savaka* for saving lives.
Saint *Aravana* knows his life story.'
Thus she made me speak. Hear what follows:
The King of the country bowed to the sage
Manmugan and said: 'I have no children.
By your grace I now receive this child.'
He brought up the boy who showed kingly
Qualities and succeeded *Bhumichandra*
To become the King of the *Savaka* land.
Has *Indra* missed his sacrificial offerings?
Is our *dharmic* King grown unrighteous?
Even though the *Kaveri* richly streams,
There is no aid for the land. Drought is come
And lives are struggling to breathe, O maiden!
The nectar given by the white-maned sea
Was drunk by gods who hid what was left.
You should not keep idle the life-giving
Bowl like that, and cease to help human beings.'
Thus spoke the Saint. Along with her mothers
Manimekalai worshipped him. Holding
The divine vessel in her hands she went
To the main road in the garb of a nun.
Soon there came many: ignorant idlers,
Lust-driven amorous youth, ruffians;

Like those who surrounded the minister
Yaugandharayana when he assumed
The form of an old man who pranced around --
So incongruous the disguise! -- to release
Vathsa, King of *Kausambi* who had been
Treacherously imprisoned by the enemy,
They spoke sadly: 'It is a pity that
The lovely girl who once ravished the heart
Of *Udayakumaran* should today
Walk abroad with a begging bowl in hand.'
But she who was *Madhavi's* daughter
Now walked the streets where lived wedded couples,
Her heart springing with a rare happiness:
'It is proper to beg from a chaste wife
First.' A voice announced: 'As in a lotus pool
Shines forth the tallest and loveliest bloom,
Among these chaste women who cause rain to fall
Is the pure *Aadirai*, the most gracious;
This is her house; kindly step in, O maid!'
So spoke the woman *Kayachantikai*,
Who was born in the *Vidhyadhara* land
In North, and had been cursed due to dire fate
By the great saint on the banks of a stream
Flowing from the *Potikai* hill in the South
To wander about suffering deeply
The scalding pangs of an endless hunger.

Line 2. him : Aaputhran

Line 8. the great saint : Manmugan

Lines 15-17. Aaputhran's sole desire was to be born again among people and continue his charitable works.

Line 25. Buddha's star was Visakha.

Line 26.	the Kind One	: Aaputhran
Lines 29–32.	good men in distant Pukar felt the impact of the incarnation in Savaka.	
Line 33.	goddess	: the image carved on a pillar in the temple; the image is said to have omniscience.
Line 40.	King	: Bhumichandra of Savaka
Lines 46 ff.	Saint Aravana addresses Manimekalai directly, exhorting her to begin her mission of feeding the poor, and start her work in Pukar. He tells her that she should not be selfish like the gods who hid the nectar from others. Inspite of the flowing Kaveri's nearness, Pukar is experiencing drought conditions.	
Lines 62 ff.	When King Udayana of Kausambi was imprisoned by King Pradhyodhana of Ujjain, Udayana's minister disguised himself and met the imprisoned King to devise means of escape.	
Lines 80 ff.	The story of Kayachantikai is related in detail in the 17th canto, 'In the Assembly Hall.'	

16. Aadirai Gives Alms

(Kayachantikai tells *Manimekalai* about *Aadirai's* life. *Aadirai's* husband *Saduvan* had lost his money to a courtesan and sailed away in search of a fortune. His ship sank and he was reported dead. *Aadirai* wished to commit *suttee*. But a voice assured her of *Saduvan's* safety. *Saduvan* was thrown by the waves on an island where he converted the *Naga* chief to *Buddha's Dharma*. Enriched by the presents given by the *Naga* chief *Saduvan* returned to *Aadirai* in *Kaveri-p-poompattinam* and they lived together happily. *Aadirai* places food into *Amuda Surabhi* held by *Manimekalai* and the vessel now begins to give forth food).

The *Vidhyadhara* maid then spoke to her
Of what befell the lady *Aadirai*.
"Lovely girl, listen.*Aadirai's* husband
Was *Saduvan* who took to evil ways
And left his wife. Attracted by the food
Ladled out by a courtesan, he gave
Her enormous wealth through evil gambling.
In time he lost his entire capital.
That woman showed him now other rich men,
Declared him insolvent and bid him bye.
Eager to rebuild his fortunes he joined
Some merchants setting sail across the seas.
A cyclone destroyed his ship. He held on
To the mast and was flung forward by waves
Till he reached the shore skirting a mountain
Where lived a *Naga* tribe that roamed naked.
His shipmates who had also saved themselves
From the wreck, returned to their home—*Pukar*.
They said: 'At midnight our ship was wrecked.
Along with many others *Saduvan*
Too was drowned, alas!' When good *Aadirai*
Heard these words she cried out aloud and wept:
'O citizens! Won't you all come forward
To prepare my funeral pyre?' She went
To the crematorium where was dug

A pit, filled with dry wood and set alight.
'I shall join my husband where he goes
Fate-impelled,' she said and entered the pyre.
Her funeral bed would not catch the flame.
Nor her garment. The sandal-paste on her
And the flowers on her flowing tresses
Did not change colour. She shone brilliant
Like the goddess of wealth seated upon
The sweet-scented lotus exuding grace.
'Ah me! Are my woes irredeemable
That even fire kills me not?' She cried.
Then came a voice resounding from heavens.
'*Aadirai*, hear. Your husband was
Led by ocean-waves to the mountain side
Where he has joined the *Naga* tribesmen.
He will not be there for many years.
He is sure to return in the ship
Of the merchant *Chandradatta*. You too
Will be freed of this terrible sorrow.'
Aadirai's kohl-lined eyes now ceased to weep.
As one comes after bathing in a lake
She returned home, her mind cleared of doubts.
Praying for the return of her husband
She performed good deeds. The chaste wives who have
The power to will clouds to pour down rain
Praised her as a serene sublime lady.
There her husband at the foot of the hill
Reached an uprising tree for restful shade.
Tired by what he had gone through in the sea
He slept; the uncultured *Naga* tribesmen
Came upon him and drew close chattering.
'This man has suffered grievously. He has
Come here all alone. Deserves pity.
His body is fleshy.' They woke him up.
As he knew their language they harmed him not.
Listening to him, they even greeted
And conversed with him. They told him thus:
'Worthy stranger, hear us. Our Lord
Stays close by. You'd better go to him.'

They led him then to their worshipful king.
The leader held court along with his spouse
Looking like a bear and its female
In that stage spread with dried blood and bleached bones
Where the stench of blood and wine was quite thick.
But language brought the merchant good friendship.
He sat in a shade with the tribal chief.
'How come you have reached this land of ours?'
Saduvan spoke of his sea-borne travails.
'He has suffered much the pangs of hunger
On the sea and needs our help. Come all!
Give this young man a lovely tribal girl,
Warm wine and plenty of meat!' The chief said.
Poor *Saduvan* was shocked by these words.
'I heard evil words. I do not want them!'
Angered, the chief shouted: 'Is there something
Good for mankind beyond woman and food?
If there is show us the same and we too
Shall be benefitted! Speak out! The merchant
Replied: 'The discerning have rejected
Mind-boggling wine and the killing of life.
The death of those who are born and the birth
Of those dead is like sleeping and waking.
As we know that those who do good deeds reach
The heavens and the rest fail in deep hell
The wise have rejected these two evils.
Know it to be so! The chief laughed loudly.
'You say that the life that leaves the body
Holes up elsewhere taking another form.
How can the life do so? Detail it well.'
Saduvan was not angered by this.
'When life is within the body it feels
What happens to it. But when life withdraws
It is unaware of even being burnt.
Thus you know of life which had fled from hence.
Not me alone but all discerning men
Know that there is a new place to return
For the lives of the dead. Our body
Lies here, but life moves, beyond distances

In dreams. So they enter bodies fashioned
According to earlier deeds. Know this!'
The killer-eyed *Naga* bowed at the feet
Of the wise merchant. 'It is not henceforth
Possible for me to conceive living
Without wine and fresh meat. Teach me the way
Of good living until dissolution
Claims my body which is nature's law!'
'You speak good words. Follow the right path hence.
I shall show you an appropriate way.
Should ship-wrecked strangers come to this mountain
Do not eat them. But save their precious lives.
Avoid violence towards any life.
Eat only animals that have died of old age.'
The humble chief agreed: 'This suits us well.
This shall be our law. Take those riches.
In the past we ate ship-wrecked mariners.
All these are their wealth. Help yourself
To these expensive wood, gauze-like garments
And various precious things.' *Saduvan* compiled.
When *Chandradatta's* vessel came that side
He got in and returned to this city.
Here he lives with his chaste good wife
Spending his well-earned wealth in charity.
O lovely lady! Accept the first alms
From the hands of renowned *Aadirai*."
Manimekalai repaired to that home
And stood at the entrance like a painting.
Aadirai came out, went round the lady,
Spoke words that chase away sorrow, and gave
Alms that was like life-giving medicine.
"The whole world be free of hunger!" She blessed.

Line 1. Vidhyadhara maid : Kayachantikai

Line 16. For the various Naga tribes in India and Ceylon, see V.Kanakasabhai, Tamils 1800 Years Ago, p. 39 ff.

Line 52.	there	: in the Naga country
Line 70.	This was possible because Saduvan knew the Naga language.	
Line 71.	tribal chief	: He is known as 'guru-magan,' and hence probably combined secular and religious power.
Line 131.	Manimekalai stood still as a painting since silence was to be observed by monks and nuns when receiving food given in charity.	

17. In the Assembly Hall

(As soon as *Aadirai* places food into it, the *Amuda Surabhi* begins to produce large quantities of food. *Kayachantikai* then recounts her past to *Manimekalai.* She had been disporting with her husband in the Southern hills with her husband *Kanchanan* and had accidentally desecrated the solitary fruit that had been the sole means of subsistence for the sage *Vrichika.* Cursed by him to suffer pangs of endless hunger, she had come to *Kaveri-p-poompattinam* for this was one city that would never say no to anyone begging a meal. *Manimekalai* gives her food. Cured of her hunger, *Kayachantikai* directs *Manimekalai* to go to the Assembly Hall in the Temple of the Wheel and feed the hungry people who come there).

Seeing how the alms-vessel received food
From the chaste wife and released mounds of meal
Much as the wealth of an honest worker
Continues to increase to help others,
And how hands grew tired receiving, yet
The divine pot continued to produce,
Kayachantikai ' sick with appetite
That could not be rid of, bowed to the good girl.
"When the Lord in a swoon was born on earth
And reached the sea to build a bridge, monkeys
Dropped large hills there that vanished in a trice.
The divine ocean received all the stones.
Such a fiery hunger stalks me now
Due to my past deeds. Hear, O Mother!
Saviour-physician to hungering souls!
Relieve me of this terrible disease!"
With guardian-grace she took a handful
And placed the food on the outstretched hands.
The other woman was presently rid
Of her morbid hunger. So she prayed then:
"I hail from Northern *Kanchanapura*
Which is found on the silvery mountain.
Led by fate I journeyed to the southern

Potikai, with my *Vidhyadhara* mate.
On the sands of a forest stream fed by
Powerful water-falls, we roamed in joy.
Vrichika, a sage with holy thread
And flowing tresses came walking that side.
He placed on a teak leaf a *jambu* fruit
As big as the biggest found
In a bunch on a healthy palm; he then went on
To bathe in a lake full of scented blooms.
My evil fate made me walk carelessly
In my pleasure; ah! my feet crushed the fruit.
Vrichika returned eager for his meal
And found me with the fruit, now all spoilt.
'This belongs to a divine *jambu* tree.
Gives a single fruit once in twelve years.
He who eats it, for the coming years twelve
Is freed from hunger that stalks mortal men.
My vow is such that I eat only once
In these twelve years. You have crushed the fruit!
May you lose the chant that gets you air-borne!
Suffer with unquenchable appetite
For twelve years. Only when I eat next
The fruit, relief for you!' Such was his curse.
Perhaps today was set for my relief.
Young maid! You ended my hunger-disease.
My mate who had vanished in great fear
From the mountain with roaring water-falls
Now returned in sadness after the sage
Had gone away, suffering from hunger.
'For no reason you have incurred the curse
Of a dread disease! Fly now in the air!'
'I have forgotten the chant! Already
A life-killing hunger gnaws me within
Burning my entrails!' Immediately
He gathered sweet fruits, roots, vegetables
All fresh and well grown and brought them to me.
Seeing me hungering still, he sorrowed.
He then spoke to me compassionate words.
'In Tamil Nadu within *Jambu* island
Is a strong city where live rich men,

Fearless, who are all beneficent,
Whose vow is to help the weak and the poor.
Though it would mean many days, walk on earth
And reach that city.' Such was his advice.
I came here and live in this *Pukar*.
On each festival season to *Indra*
He comes to this lovely, majestic town
Sees me suffer endless pangs of hunger
Mourns, counts the years to go still, and returns.
You save me from this. My salutations.
Manimekalai! I now return home.
There is a Temple of the Wheel that saves
Men from sorrow; there live pure sages.
Within is an Assembly Hall that has
Many entrances; hungry pilgrims from
Distant lands and the helpless who have no
Guardians, gather in this self-same place.
They will all be looking for charity.
Go there, O maid, lovely with parted tresses!"
Then she flew away. Our youthful maid
Walked on one side of *Pukar's* major road.
She saluted the Assembly Hall thrice;
Getting up into the Assembly Hall
She saluted thrice the temple
Of the ancient goddess, revered by all.
She also bowed to the pillar-statue
Who tells human beings the cause of their birth.
Like heavy rains to a forest that burns
In hot sun with all its dried bamboo clumps
The damsel came with the nectar-vessel
Among the crowd suffering hunger-pangs.
"This is *Aaputhran's* nectar-vessel. Come,
All of you who need food!" The Assembly
Of the city with ever-new riches
Echoed to the sounds of crowds having their meals.

Lines 7-8. Kayachantikai's sickness is known as yanai-thee (elephant fire: Skt. Bhasmaka sickness).

Line 9.	Lord in swoon	: Vishnu who is in a yogic trance, reclining on the milky ocean.
Line 10.	born on earth	: incarnated as Rama
	bridge	: built by the monkeys to connect India and Lanka, the capital of Ravana.
Line 17.	she	: Manimekalai
Line 70.	he	: Kanchanan, the consort of Kayachantikai.

18. Udayakumaran Comes to the Assembly Hall

(*Manimekalai's* going amidst beggars infuriates her grandmother *Chitrapati*. She complains to *Udayakumaran* that he must not be a passive spectator. *Udayakumaran* speaks of Goddess *Manimekala's* advice that rulers should exercise self-control. *Chitrapati* brushes aside his doubts. *Udayakumaran* goes to the Assembly Hall and confronts *Manimekalai*. Finding him impervious to words of moral wisdom, the maid enters the temple of *Sambapathi* and takes on the form of *Kayachantikai* to escape the Prince's attentions. Non-plussed, the Prince decides to stay on in the Assembly Hall and meet *Manimekalai*).

When *Chitrapati* heard this, she flared up,
Her heart bursting bounds with boiling fury
As when an iron rod, all heated up
Is thrust into a wound defying cure.
"I shall end this drama," she vowed, shaken
To the assembled group of courtesans.
"After *Kovalan's* death *Madhavi* had
Entered the nunnery. Has not this caused
Laughter? The discerning of this city
Have found it cause enough to speak our shame.
We are no chaste wives from noble houses
Who when their husbands die and themselves live
Are disgusted with their life.
So they enter the flaming pyre as if
Moving into the waters of a cool lake.
Our income is from the wealth of many.
We are like a lute that is not destroyed
When the lutanist dies; also, like the
Bee which moves away from the bloom
Emptied of honey, as in times of loss
The goddess of wealth abandons humans
We give up men when they are of no worth.
Is it not a matter of shame for us
When we accept the garments of a nun?
The creeper *Manimekalai* born to

Mqdhavi has now bloomed: a royal bee,
Udayakumaran wants to join
That bloom with a single mind. To help him
I shall throw away her begging vessel
In the midst of the wretched begging crowd.
If I do not have *Manimekalai*
Brought here on the royal chariot
I may be banished from dancing houses
Condemned to live as a maid of ill-repute
And made to carry burnt bricks on my head
Around the dancing hall!" Such indeed was
Her dread vow. Sighing deep hotted up breaths
She thought out a logical argument.
Followed by chosen bejewelled maidens
Her lovely face fringed by small beads of sweat
She walked on the road where moved chariots,
And reached the palace of the royal prince.
Where the beetles buzz with honey bees
In a rich corner spread well with fresh sand,
Is a marble-hall brilliantly lit,
Made of golden walls and coral pillars,
With an artistic ceiling pearl in laid.
Here, on a couch held up by lions
Reclined, the prince fanned by lovely damsels
With yak-tails as milky as foam-white waves.
Him she saluted and praised. With a laugh
That discovered his ordered teeth he asked:
"Is *Madhavi's* renunciation
And that of *Manimekalai* proceeding faultless?"
"The swaying creeper has given birth
To a priceless jewel, a waist-girdle.
Ripe and lovely, that jewel is welcomed
By the art of dancing in our land
Rich with music and poetic lore.
To help the bee, *Udayakumaran*,
Taste the bloom have I come; that can be found
In the ruined Hall beyond the city.
Sword-wielder! May your flowers stay fresh!"
As if a ship-wrecked sailor on the seas
Gains a beat, the prince spoke to the lady:

"I took the statue in the marble hall
For an artist's triumph. But ere I left
I found her rosy hands binding the breasts
Tightening ever so slightly. A smile
Blossomed in between the coral-red lips
Revealing pearl-white teeth, like the honey
My heart desired to drink, and even thus
A new life and with it hope entered me.
Her large eyes that were like water-lilies
And rivalled sharp spears and darkling fish
Looked sideways to make me understand that
The maid's heart had certainly left her side.
That jewel-like girl in the marble hall
Has taken away my heart and saved my life
And hid herself! I kept awake till midnight.
There came before me a golden woman.
Asking me to rule well she advised me
To forget the maiden who had renounced
Was she a goddess? A divine being?
Since then have I been in this endless swoon!"
Chitrapati laughed a little and said:
"Young prince, forget that incident. Have not
Even the gods lost their heads over love
Many times over, if we begin to count?
The lord of the immortals received shame
And a thousand eyes, for a sage's wife.
The fire-god lusted for the chaste wives
Of the seven great sages on the banks
Of lake *Saravana*, fed by *Meru's* streams;
His wife then assumed the form of the wives
Seven and ended her husband's desire.
Yet you speak of divine commands, O Prince!
She was not born for familial life
Where maidenhood and wifehood are guarded
And also widowhood by those around;
Those chaste women do not glance at strangers.
For them their husband is greater than god.
In public view our dancing women
Spread their music, dance and beauty on the stage,
Send forth the net of their long-lashed eyes

Into the hearts of the men who look on
To help Cupid work with his bow and arrow
And with sweet words take away their riches
Leaving them bee-like, when they are poor.
Is it not the right duty of a Prince
To order them into their profession?"
Udayakumaran's heart got confused.
Ascending a chariot with swift horses
He went to the Hall where the maiden was.
Like the Goddess of the Battle-Ground feeding
Hungry spirits out of a skull, he saw
The maiden with the vessel giving food
To crowds suffering from infernal hunger.
His love burst the bounds of self-control.
"I will go ask this lonely girl myself.
'Dearest thief who has stolen my heart
By entering within me all of you!
Why have you so willingly accepted
This ascetic life, these weeds of the nun?'"
He went close to her and asked: 'Good woman!
What is the reason for this askesis?
Tell me!' Such was his confident query.
"This was my lord *Rahulan:* it is meet
For me to salute him." And so she did.
"How can I speak ill even if my heart
Goes to him uncontrolled and he decided
To catch my hand! It is not right for me
To reject my beloved!" So she trembled.
"If you would listen to discerning words
I shall certainly answer your doubts.
Birth, ageing, torture by sickness,
Death: such is this holder-vase of sorrows.
Having learnt the nature of this body
I desired to walk the path of *dharma.*
What wisdom can ladies impart to you,
A pachyderm that destroys enemies?
You have heard me. Be willed to right action."
The gentle girl went away from the Prince
And entered the Gurjara-style temple,
The residence of the ancient goddess.

"Who can foretell what men may do?" she thought
And prayed to her adorned with fresh garlands.
Repeating the magic chant that gave her
The form of the maid *Kayachantikai*,
Manimekalai returned to the front.
The prince drew near but recognised her not.
To the Gurjara-temple deity he vowed:
"Among the statuettes how shall I find
Manimekalai who has hid herself
After handing over the begging pot
To the hungering *Kayachantikai*?
If you will not point her out to me
I shall stay here for all time to come.
Hear me some more, immortal maiden!
Her pearly teeth within coral lips,
Long fish-eyes that have not been *kohl*-painted,
Her bent eyelashes that are divided mid way,
Sharp nose, several bends in her body,
Breasts pointed, she stood fully arrayed.
My guardians of knowledge withdrew from me.
With the lute of her voice she spoke so gently
Words of great import. As if she had won
A new elephant, she made me all hers.
Ancient Goddess! Unless you give back
Manimekalai who entered this place
I shall not go: this my vow as I touch
Thy feet: grant me relief," the Prince pronounced.

Line 1.	Chitrapati	: Manimekalai's grandmother
	this	: the act of Manimekalai attending to the beggars in the Assembly Hall.
Line 5.	drama	: referring to Manimekalai's going about Pukar's streets with a begging bowl.
Line 7.	Kovalan	: Manimekalai's father

Line 16. many : many rich men

Lines 35-36. It was a tradition to punish dancing girls who went against the norms of their profession by making them go round the dancing hall with seven bricks loaded on their head.

lions : carved lions supported the royal seat.

Lines 55 ff. A play on the names of Madhavi (also the name of a flowering creeper) and Manimekala! which literally means 'a jewelled waist-girdle.'

Line 61. that : that bloom (here, Manimekalai)

Line 68. literally, hands held akimbo

Line 81. golden woman : goddess Manimekala

Lines 90-92. Indra, smitten by love, ravished Ahalya, the wife of sage Gautama. The Rishi cursed the god to develop a thousand eyelets all over his body.

Lines 92-96. Agni was once overcome by love for the wives of the séven great rishis. His wife, Swaha Devi, took the form of the wives of the sages (except Arundhati) and thus satisfied her husband's desire.

Line 111. them : the dancing girls

Lines 115-116. Durga, deity of the battle-zones is said to feed her army of spirits with the blood and flesh scattered on the battle-field.

Line 128. Mánimekalai recognises Udayakumaran to have been her husband Rahulan in an earlier birth.

Lines 144-145. Evidently the temple to Goddess Sambapathi had been fashioned in the Gurjara style, famous for its

sculptural artistry from ancient times.

Lines 148–150. One of the chants taught her by Goddess Manimekala enabled Manimekalai to assume the form she wanted.

Line 151. The Prince could not recognise her as Manimekalai looked like Kayachantikai.

Line 159. immortal maiden : Goddess Sambapathi

Line 165. lit : the Prince became devoid of common-sense.

Lines 167–168. The Prince insinuates that Manimekalai had hunted him (the elephant) with the implements for elephant-trapping like the beauties of her body, speech and wisdom.

19. Prison Becomes Refuge

(When *Udayakumaran* vows before the Goddess that he will not leave the place till he gets *Manimekalai,* the Pillar-statue chides him for desecrating the temple precincts with such words. Awe-struck, the Prince returns to his palace, telling himself that he would get at the mystery later on: *Manimekalai,* in *Kayachantikai* form, goes to the city prison and feeds the inmates. The guards inform King *Mavankilli* of the *Vidhyadhara* lady and her miracle vessel. The King summons the maid. On *Manimekalai's* request, he transforms the prison into a haven for charitable purposes).

As the Prince with fresh garlands took the vow
After saluting the feet of the goddess,
A divine spirit hid in a statue
Cunningly fashioned by an artist, said:
"Young man! In the presence of the Goddess
You have spoken wrong words in thoughtless pride.
Udayakumaran was much troubled,
Like one thrown in a dark, air-less dungeon,
"It was a divine being that warned me:
'Forget the maid and live righteously!'
Divine too the vessel the maid carried
To satisfy the hunger of the crowds:
This statue that warns, 'You have wronged by words
The ancient Goddess,' is divine too.
I will learn the truth about this later
In the maid's work," he told himself and went.
Night followed him like a black elephant,
Keeperless, its forehead the evening,
The crescent-moon its tusk, desire its trunk,
Flower-scent its ichor, wind-swift, fearsome,
Evening drums sounding its triumphant march
As it had defeated the King of Day
And made the enormous earth food for night.
The sweet tunes of the *Makara-lute* strings
Expertly plucked by the town's young couples

Pierced his heart like a sharp-edged iron.
Sighing like a black-smith's red-hot furnaee
He went, his uncontrolled heart all a-flame.
Manimekalai, maid of pure action.
In her changed form within the temple, thought:
"The Prince will not give me up if I move
In public halls as *Madhavi's* daughter."
So she continued with the hungering
Kayachantikai form well known to all,
Living as the saviour of the helpless.
"It is the right duty of the mendicants
To beg and serve the needy on their own.
Such is the instruction of the wise teachers."
Deciding thus, she took the nectar-pot
In the niche of the ancient Goddess.
The maid journeyed in *Pukar* city
And willingly reached the prison-house where
Those who disobey the royal commands
Are kept in deep sorrow and sharp hunger.
Here she fed the hungering inmates
Till their hands grew tired of receiving.
The guards wondered at the single vessel
That gave so much, and hastened to the King
To tell him all about the charity
From the vessel, and the work of the maid.
The King had gone to the royal garden
With his queen, *Seerthi*. She was the daughter
Of *Mahabali's* nephew. The same King
With the big, strong bow, who gifted away
When *Vishnu* incarnated as the Dwarf
And regained his form to measure the worlds.
Our King enjoyed the flower garden
Where the beetles on the branches fluted,
The bees sounded like strings of a lute,
The nightingales sang and the peacocks danced.
In a corner with a swan sans its mate
Danced a peacock and its hen in rhythm
Going round and round, their large wings unfurled:
The gracious King watched the sight with pleasure,
As if it were the dance of Lord *Krishnu*

With his elder brother and *Nappinnai*.
The sight of a spangled peacock
Close to a mango near a flower
Appeared as though a lovely maid was feeding
A parrot with milk from a golden plate.
He laughed to see a male monkey swinging
Its mate seated on the bejewelled swing
Specially erected for lovely girls
Within the garden full of flowering trees.
The closeness of bamboo clumps with green leaves
To the *katamba* tree with white blossoms
Made him salute with his hands and worship:
"Here is *Krishna* with his elder brother."
With dancers who knew the art of miming,
Scholars expert in dramatic epics,
Lutanists well trained to pluck music notes,
Capable beaters on the drums' two sides,
Tuners aligning the flute and the human voice,
Group singers of enjoyable ballads,
Bead-stringers repairing pearl-necklaces,
Appliers of dry sandalwood powder,
Women painting their breasts with red colour,
Garland-makers weaving lotus petals,
Hair-dressers applying scented smoke to tresses,
And women watching themselves in mirrors
Of burnished gold, he disported himself
Like the heavenly lord of all the gods.
Smilingly he walked, halting near plants
Like wild-lime, jasmine, *cherunti* with blooms,
Mullai bushes and trees with dark flowers.
He called out to the short mongoose, long-eared
Hare, leaping gazelles and the forest goat
To come near, and with his gracious hand
Pointed them out to his happy queen.
He continued to play with the help of
Cupid, the spring season and the gentle breeze,
At the fountains and man-made rockeries,
Water-falls, rooms of flowering creepers,
Vast lakes, wells ingeniously hidden,
Obscure corners, rest-halls made of marble --

Everywhere he roamed and grew tired.
Magadhan jewellers, *Mahratta* goldsmiths,
Avanti's blacksmiths, foreign carpenters
And Tamil artisans had worked as one
To produce the grand royal seating place
With coral legs and bejewelled pillars,
Its pearl-strung ceiling with proper angles
Gracefully structured by expert builders.
On to this palace with its golden roof-top
And golden floor stranger to common cleaning pastes,
He ascended, verily an *Indra*.
The guards informed the door-keepers, and bowed.
With the king's leave, they saluted and said:
"You wore rattan reeds after defeating
The *Vanji* King, as you desired more earth.
With elephants, chariots, cavalry,
Sword-lashing infantry and advance guards
The *Chera* and *Pandya* Kings had hastened
To war with you: on the banks of *Kari*
You had got their flags through your brother
Who wears *athi* leaves! O *Mavankilli*,
Brave-shouldered King with the white umbrella!
May you live with fame for all time to come!
Hail our Lord, who is charitable!
May your enemies perish: Listen!
A stranger woman who was suffering
From hunger-diseases and was roaming around
Entered the inner rooms of the prison.
O famous King! She praised your greatness.
With a solitary mendicant's pot
She distributed food for all inmates.
Hail you, our King for all time to come!"
As they spoke thus, the gracious-hearted King
Directed them: "Bring at once the young maid
To this place!" Accompanied by the guards,
The maid reached the royal presence and said:
"All hail to the graciousness of the King!"
"Who are you who has taken to such hard
Ascetic living? From whence this vessel?"
To the King's queries the young girl replied:

"Hail to you, wearer of scented garlands.
I am a *Vidhyadhara* maid. I have roamed
This festival-clad town due to a curse.
Hail! May rains fall and crops increase their yield!
May you be safe from evil! This indeed
Is a begging vessel given to me
By a goddess in the Hall: it is divine.
It brought a cure to my hunger-sickness.
This is medicine to hungry human beings."
"Can I help you, young woman?" The King asked.
The gentle girl said: "Pull down the prison,
And build there a refuge for charity
Housing wise, good-hearted people." At once
As the maid had wanted, the King ordered
The prison to be cleared of dodgers
Of tax, and housed it with good people
So as to greatly benefit *Pukar*.

Line 2.	Goddess	: Goddess Sambapathi
Line 3.	The pillar-statue or 'Kandir Pavai'	
Line 9.	divine being	: Goddess Manimekala
Lines 15-16.	i.e., by watching the maid's charitable works.	
Lines 17 ff.	One of the finest epic similes employed by Sathanar.	
Line 22.	King of day	: the Sun
Line 30.	Refers to her changed form as Kayachantikai.	
Line 53.	Mahabali's nephew	: literally, a descendant of Mahabali, the mythological King from whom Vishnu, in his incarnation as Vamana, begged for three spans of earth.

Line 66.	elder brother	: Balarama. Krishna, Balarama and Krishna's wife Nappinnai are said to have danced holding hands with one another in Dwaraka. The dance is known as Kuravai.

Lines 67-70. The peacock is compared to a maid, the mango to a parrot and the flower to a golden plate.

Lines 75-78. The dark bamboo clumps and the white blossoms of the Katamba tree appeared as if the dark-hued Krishna and fair-complexioned Balarama were standing together. The illusion brought out the devotional piety of the King.

Line 92. i.e., like Indra

Line 115. i.e., it was cleaned only with scented sandal

Lines 119-120. As a symbol of having defeated the Vanji King, whose royal insignia was the rattan reed.

Line 131. The guards have naturally mistaken Manimekalai for Kayachantikai as the latter had been a familiar beggar in Pukar for the last twelve years.

20. Kanchanan Kills Udayakumaran

(The transformation of the prison-house into a house of refuge under *Manimekalai's* directions excites the Prince's imagination. He goes to the Assembly Hall to meet her. *Kanchanan* comes here in search of *Kayachantikai* and goes to *Manimekalai* mistaking her identity and asks her to return with him. She moves towards *Udayakumaran* and speaks on the impermanence of youth. *Kanchanan* is incensed and hides himself. *Udayakumaran* guesses that this maid is *Manimekalai* and goes away. He returns at night to get at truth. *Kanchanan* comes out of his hiding place and kills him. The pillar-statue tells *Kanchanan* of his mistake and that his beloved *Kayachantikai* was already dead. The *Vidhyadhara* goes away in sorrow).

Thanks to the good maiden, the King's order
Freed the prisoners from infernal torture.
As those working out their evil past
Gain a good life by their virtuous deeds,
Here was built a temple of *Buddha*.
A seminary for the kind-hearted,
A kitchen and a dining-hall; and these
Were backed by plentiful property.
Learning of the maid's going to the King
And how the King of unsullied fame ordered
The transformation of the prison into
A house of noble-hearted charity
The prince decided to act. "Even should
The wise criticise or the King get angry
I shall seize that girl with lovely tresses
When she comes out of the Assembly Hall,
And place her on my golden chariot.
It will then be time enough to listen
To her learning, and old words of wisdom."
He then went into the Assembly Hall
Whither she had gone to feed hungry men.
"It is twelve years since the great sage cursed
My lady because of an evil fate

On the bamboo-clustered banks of a river
On the *Potiya* Hill with cloud-rich crests.
Yet *Kayachantikai* has not come back."
Sorrowing thus, her husband *Kanchanan*
Descended upon the ancient town
To search for her in the Spirit Square, gardens,
Convents, public halls and Assemblies.
He happened to witness the lovely girl
Cure the sickness of hunger among all.
"Here is a solitary vessel
In your hand. By these many are fed.
Did the gods give you this to overcome
That terrible, elephantine hunger?"
As he praised her in terms of their past love,
She drew away since her heart did not like that.
Going near *Udayakumaran*
She pointed out an old crone to him.
"Look how her hair that once gleamed as black sand
Has now become but a stretch of white sand.
Don't you perceive how her moon-like forehead
Is now all grey, marked by lines of old age.
No more eye-lashes like a mighty bow.
Divided they are like dried up shrimp.
The lotus-like eyes water in sickness.
The lovely nose drips mucus constantly.
No more you see a smile with pearl-like teeth:
They are now uneven, dried up gourd seeds.
Whither the lips like silk-cotton flowers?
They now release the stench of rotten meat.
The ears once lovely like *vallai* stem
Have lost their flesh, and are mere dried-up skin.
No more you see the proud uprising breasts.
They hang loose and limp like bags grown empty.
Those same shoulders that were like bamboo stems
Are now bent like the coconut palmleaves.
Look at the shrivelled fingers whose skin has
Divorced blood-vessels, and their nails hang limp.
The thighs that once rivalled plantain stems
Are now but the dried stems of the screw-pine.

Don't you see the once desirable shins
Now ugly with blood-vessels and bones visible?
Watch the feet that were tender in beauty
Now ugly like dried-up coconut seeds.
O Prince, the ingenious ways devised
By men to cover this fleshy form
Are many: they do it with flowers,
Sandal paste, clothes and jewels." Thus she spoke.
"She cares not for my praise. Follows others.
She looks at me as at a stranger. But
To the prince with the scented garlands, she speaks
Ancient words of wisdom, all the while
Smiling through coral lips and pearly teeth.
Her lily-like eyes betray love for him.
May be he is her lover: so she has
Elected to stay here." *Kanchanan*,
Wielder of the bright sword, thought this wise
Waxing in wrath, hid himself nearby
Like an angry serpent within a pit.
Though the Prince heard her wise words,
he did not
Give up his great desire for the damsel.
"*Manimekalai* with bejewelled hands
Has come as *Kayachantikai* with a pot
And enmeshed my heart by her magic ways.
If so, she would never agree to join
At night a stranger who spoke of the past.
I shall return at midnight to find out
Her identity." With this thought in him,
He went away sad along with Cupid,
Who has a fish-marked flag, a sugarcane
Bow, and arrows made of blossom buds.
When the city slept, he started alone
Like a tiger on an elephant kill,
Left the palace entrance and reached the Hall
Where the maiden was: like one entering
A high ant-hill within which lay hidden
A venomous snake, he stepped silently
Into the inner apartments, while his
Body exuded fine sandal paste scent.

The *Vidhyadhara* who was hidden there
Thought: "Ah, he comes for this lady." Like an
Incensed serpent which bares its poison teeth
And raises its hood upwards, he got up.
Following the Prince, he flashed out his sword
And cut the shoulders that had garlands on.
"I will take with me *Kayachantikai*
And fly back," he thought and went near her.
The statue on the pillar erected
By divine inspiration, warned him thus:
"Beware! O *Vidhyadhara Kanchana!*
She is *Manimekalai* in changed garb.
Kayachantikai freed of her hunger
Flew away to the skies. Listen to this..
Persons who travel by air never fly
Above the *Vindhya* crest, home of *Durga*.
If they do, the guardian of the *Vindhyas*,
Vindhaghatika, is angered, and she
Draws them through their shadow and eats them up.
Your love too has entered within her.
O *Kanchana*, you need not be distressed.
But though fate caused *Udayakumaran's*
Death, know that you have also sinned in this
Matter, O *Vidhyadhara Kanchana!*
That sin will not leave you without effect."
As the statue spoke, the *Vidhyadhara*,
Feeling in his sad heart the avenging furies,
Rose up in the sky and flew away.

Line 8. The King's endowment for the continuance of charitable works.

Line 22. This is Kanchanan speaking to himself

Line 25. The crests of the Hill were so high that they were lost in the clouds; or, the Hill had thick forests which attracted dark clouds throughout the year.

Line 27.	her	: Kayachantikai.
Line 28.	ancient town	: Pukar.
Line 31.	lovely girl	: Manimekalai now disguised as Kayachantikai.

Line 33-36. Kanchanan addresses Manimekalai mistaking her to be his beloved, Kayachantikai.

Line 38. Manimekalai is naturally annoyed to be solicited thus by a stranger.

Line 39 ff. Manimekalai draws closer to Udayakumaran so as to avoid Kanchanan's entreaties. At the same time she wishes to turn Udayakumaran's attention away from her lovely body as Manimekalai since she wants him to follow the True Way.

Line 71 ff. Kanchanan thinks that Kayachantikai has rejected him in favour of the Prince as the latter was richer and more attractive.

Line 84 ff. Udayakumaran guesses at the true identity of the maid and wishes to make sure of her real identity at night.

Line 88.	stranger	: Kanchanan

Line 91 ff. Literally, his heart smitten with love for Manimekalai.

Line 103.	this lady	: Kanchanan still thinks the maid is his Kayachantikai.
Line 111.	divine inspiration	: either of the sage who caused the statue to be erected, or the sculptor had been vouchsafed divine inspiration to create such a miracle statue.

Line 121. The message of the pillar-statue is that Kayachantikai had offended Durga of the Vindhyas by flying above the mountain crest and had accordingly been punished with death.

Line 122. i.e. Kanchana need not feel distressed that Manimekalai has been widowed, as what has happened is due to the past actions of Udayakumaran.

21. The Pillar-Statue Foretells the Future

(*Manimekalai* who has watched the goings on in the Hall now steps back into her original form and laments the end of *Udayakumaran*, recalling the past. The Pillar-statue comforts her and says that *Udayakumaran* had killed a cook in anger in his previous life as *Rahulan*. The deed has recoiled now. Fate is inexorable! The Pillar-statue also describes what is in store for *Manimekalai* in the future. This forecast prepares *Manimekalai* to face the future with equanimity. The Pillar-statue says that he is the God *Duvathigan* retained here as a divine witness).

The maiden with flower-bedecked tresses
Who lay within the ancient temple
To the west of the tall carved pillar
Now rose in confusion after watching
The *Vidhyadhara's* act and the fatal
End of the Prince, and listening
To what the divine statue detailed
In terms of a wondrous message. She said:
"No more this form." Presently released from
The impersonation, she lamented:
"When you died stung by the basilisk
I burnt up my body in your pyre.
When I could not withdraw my heart from you
At the garden, my family deity
Took me to *Manipallava* island.
She showed me the saviour *Buddha's* Seat
Where I learnt of my past. Further she told
Me all about your earlier life.
My love! I took *Kayachantikai's* form
To save you by telling you of *Dharma*,
The way of sorrow tread by evil men
And the firm law of life, death and rebirth.
The *Vidhyadhara's* mistaken anger
Was used by your evil fate, perhaps!"
She thus wept in terms of sorrowing words,
Sighed, and struggled with great pain to get up.

To her the statue of the pillar spoke:
"Do not approach him, maid with red-veined eyes!
Do not approach the youth with fresh garlands.
There have been many more births in the past
When this young man had been your husband
And you had been wife to this loving one.
Nor do the births past exhaust existence.
Engaged as you are in the attempt to
Overcome the birth-cycles, do not grieve!"
The golden maid understood the wise words.
She asked: "Are you the deity of true voice
Who stays in this Hall? My salutations.
In his past birth, this young man lost his life
Stung by the terrible fatal basilisk.
Now was he felled by the *Vidhyadhara's*
Sword, leaving my heart shocked and bereaved.
Do you know the reasons behind all this?
If you do, let me receive your grace!"
"Damsel with long eyes, listen." Thus began
That statue to speak in a divine voice.
"On the vast *Kayankarai* river banks
You paid respects to sage *Brahmadharman*
Who spoke of the advent of the *Buddha*
So as to cleanse the evil in men's hearts.
'We wish to offer a feast tomorrow
To you, O sage Such was your request.
That evening was full of joy for you.
In the morning the cook who came to work
Missed his step, slipped on the floor and fell
Along with the vessel he held which broke.
Enraged at the missed opportunity
To serve the pure sage who guards well *dharma*,
Rahulan swung his sword fatally
Separating the cook's shoulders and head.
Ah, gentle maiden with scented tresses!
That evil now has followed him and you.
Persons who say 'god will save devotees
From results of sinful actions' are fools.
Even if due to love of righteousness
An evil is done, fate will not be denied.

When fate does catch up, that life will suffer.
The same life, should it perform wholesome deeds
Could also attain release from all births.
It was but his evil deed in the past.
That came now to destroy your husband.
Hear some more, O creeper-like good maid!
The King will hear of the Prince's death
Through the holy men of this Assembly
And order you to be placed in the prison.
The queen will desire to have you with her
And so take you out of confinement.
Madhavi will salute the sage's feet
And inform him of your plight. With her
He will go to the palace. To the queen
He will speak *dharma*. She will release you.
Taking leave of your elders, you will
Go to *Aaputhran* who is now a king.
With him you will gather *dharma*-knowledge.
Accompanied by him sailing a ship
You will fly to pure *Manipallavam*
Visiting the island once again.
After the king of *Savaka* returns
Home, having heard *Dipatilakai* tell
His past, you will also leave the island
As a mendicant, and reach *Vanji* town.
There are several scholars in *Vanji*
Who can impart wisdom of the highest Truth.
'Our God is the Lord. He created
All lives and things properly,' say a few.
'Though he is formless, he creates all forms.
He indeed is the true God,' so speak others.
Yet others say: 'Our God cuts the link
Of evil birth, takes us to the crests of joy.'
'The five essences make the world,' say some
These varied teachings of the world religions
You would hear, O girl with scented tresses!
When one of them says: 'There is no God.
The dead do not return. Why talk of *dharma*?'
You will laugh, lovely girl, as you know well
The truth about birth and righteousness

'Do you make fun of my thoughts? You shall then
Teach me!' Then will you tell him of your past.
'That was in a magic swoon created by
The goddess who brought you. You had but
dreamt.'
Such would be his reaction, O good girl!
But you will not be impatient. Instead
You will clear his doubts, proving the truth
Of fate that follows, and also rebirth.
Do you know or not that statuettes
Made of faultless wood, mud and stone do not
Speak? If you do know, then listen to me.
All over this ancient great city
On the roads where chariots with flags move,
In temples, and where old trees are found,
On the banks of ancient streams, and at
Public assemblies and halls well surveyed,
For the guarding of this fortified town
Wise men have planned with care and established
Divine figures made by expert artistes
With mud, stone or wood, or painted on walls.
These same gods stay permanently in place
And speak to mortals all about their fate.
Good girl! Would you hear about my life?
I am one of the largest divine groups.
Duvathigan my name. From this pillar
Fashioned for me by *Mayan*, I stray not.
Hear about me. Even gods above
Do not know as much as mortals here.
I do not know who informed this city
That *Chitrasena* was my friend.
As if they were with us in those places
Where we had roamed together playfully
They have drawn us, and praised our greatness
And now offer fresh flowers and scented smoke.
O *Manimekalai!* I have boldly
Forecast the future. Believe in my words."
"I 'll understand words divine-inspired.
But speak to me of my life upto death."
Duvathigan said: "Sure, I'll tell.

Good damsel, hear of what will happen.
Ruin will seize *Kanchi* with the golden fort
When rains fail and lives get lost. Then will you
Take up properly the divine vessel
In this niche of the Ancient Goddess
As it is life-sustaining medicine.
Along with your mothers, you will reach.
Kanchi, as *Aravana* is there too.
By *Aravana's* grace, O lovely girl,
You will be freed from other religious
Thoughts, and gain the true way of life for you.
Holding the vessel of *dharmic* living
That causes rains to pour on a drought-hit earth
You will save lives:-shades of coming events
In your life are to be witnessed there.
You will then tell *Aravana* all that
You had heard about other religions.
He will teach you of askesis, *dharma*,
How they interlink, and the path of Release.
'To chase away ignorance and save living things
There will rise the Sun of *Buddha*, spreading
Dharma, gleaming with realisations.
Till then will I be in this place guarding
The Truth, through several births and deaths.
May you and your mothers live faultless.
May your mind be ever filled with *dharma*.'
When he says so, you will follow his words
Without fail. Your life will come to an end
At *Kanchi* after you perform good deeds.
Henceforth, your births in north *Magadha*
Will be male, and you will lead *dharmic* lives.
Nobly born, freed from ignorance, you will
Gain release when you are the Chief Disciple
Of *Buddha* who teaches the Truthful Path.
Hear more, O maid with a shining forehead!
Goddess *Manimekala* had once saved
From sea a wise ancestor of yours.
You had fed well the sage *Sadhuchakra*.
Knowing your past births the Goddess
Had come to the garden and brought you hence

To *Manipallavam.*" *Duvathigan's*
Speech helped her give up measureless sorrow.
The good woman found the path to Release.
Like a peacock freed from the net, she felt free
From ignorance. The sun awoke the world.

Line 3.	carved pillar	: the pillar on which the statue of God Duvathigan had been carved.
Line 5.	Vidhyadhara	: Kanchanan
Line 8.	she	: Manimekalai
Line 9.	this form	: the form of Kayachantikai
Line 11.	you	: Udayakumaran
	basilisk	: the mythical 'drishtivisham' snake which is said to kill by its glance.
Line 14.	The garden is the one where Manimekalai and Sutamati had gone to gather flowers in the third canto. See also cantos 4 and 5.	
	family deity	: Goddess Manimekala, the family deity of Kovalan.
Lines 16-18.	see cantos 8 and 9.	
Lines 19-22.	see canto 20.	
Line 36.	golden maid	: Manimekalai
Line 47 ff.	See canto 9	

Line 59.	Rahulan	: the name of Udayakumaran in an earlier birth.
Line 71.	his	: Udayakumaran's
Line 78.	sage	: Aravana Adikal
Line 83.	king	: Punyarajan, son of Bhumichandran
Lines 94-95.	a few	: the Brahmavadins. See canto 27, 11. 96-97.
Lines 96-97.	the Advaitins.	
Lines 98-99.	the Karmabrahmavadins	
Line 100.	the Bhutavadins	
Line 103.	one of them	: one of the Bhutavadins
Lines 107-108.	the Bhutavadin speaks	
Lines 109-110.	the Bhutavadin speaks	
Line 132.	Mayan	: the heavenly architect
Line 152.	mothers	: Madhavi and Sutamati

22. Imprisoned

(Devotees who come to the Temple of the Wheel for early morning prayers notice the dead form of the Prince and report it to the ascetics in the temple. The ascetics learn from *Manimekalai* about what had happened and inform the King, after preparing him for the bad news by pointing out the example of his ancestor *Kagandhan* who killed his own sons for doing evil. The King orders the army chief to consign the Prince's body to the flames and imprison *Manimekalai).*

As the sun's orb chased away the night's darkness
Devotees came to the pillar-statue
Within the temple to pray: when they told
The sages of the Temple of the Wheel
About *Udayakumaran's* death, they in turn
Questioned *Manimekalai:* "Young woman!
Do you know anything regarding this?"
Without fear she told them all she knew.
The sages kept the dead Prince and the maid
In a hiding place, veiled from the public.
Then they went to the enormous palace,
And permitted by guards, approached the King.
"May your white umbrella shade the earth
From the heights, like the brilliant white moon.
Your spear and sceptre shine with grace!
Your royal wheel move without hindrance!
O King, may you live the allotted span
Of life, in terms of happiness!
Not this day alone: even in the past
This city has seen much self-destruction
By many who had drunk the wine of lust
And had approached with bad intent chaste wives,
Losing their hearts to ladies following
The spiritual life, O gracious King!
When the Virgin Goddess warned King *Kaantan:*
'Do not appear in front of the Lord
Of the Axe who decimated dynasties!'
He wondered: 'Who can guard this large city?

It will have to be *Kagandhan*, my son,
Born to a courtesan: of whom my foes
In this *Jambu* island are all afraid
Whose insults never make him draw back.'
He called with love: 'You have no royal right,
Hence *Parasurama* will not maul you.
Till I return after gaining the words
Of *Agastya* and am freed from worry,
Guard this city, *Kagandha*!' *Kagandhi*,
He named the city appropriately,
And disguising himself, went away.
Having bathed in *Kaveri*, a brahmin,
Lass, *Marudi*, was returning home alone.
Taking her to be of easy virtue
Kagandha's son met her on *Kaveri's* banks
And called out: 'Come!' She was much perturbed:
'The woman truly chaste for whom rain falls
Is never the cause of lust in a stranger's heart.
I have entered another's heart. What right
Have I to tend the fire for my husband?'
Wailing, she decided not to go home.
Instead, she drew close to the Spirit Square.
'I have not wronged the man who married me.
Here have I become an easy catch.
Have I not chosen married chastity?
I do not know what evil I have done.
O Spirit of the Square! Are you but an
Illusive god?' To her lamenting thus
Came the enormous Spirit and said:
'Lady, hear. You have not understood
The truthful poet's dictum. The chaste wife
Bows to her spouse, and not for other gods.
When she asks for rains, it always pours!
You have placed faith in untruths and riddles,
Loved the gay trappings of the festival
And have even followed after strange gods.
O lady! The rains will not obey you.
Nor have you the power to burn the hearts
Of strangers, like women fiercely chaste.
If you give up these wrong ways, O lady,

The very clouds will obey your words!
The dread noose in my hand cannot bind you
As it would women of loose character.
Nor have I the right to interfere
Before seven days, when the King should act.
On the seventh day from now, *Kagandhan*
Will hear of his son's heart misled
To you, and is sure to have him killed!'
Thus the Spirit spoke of the rule of law.
On the same day mentioned by the Spirit
The son was cut down by the father's sword.
Hear some more! O King of kings on earth,
Rich beyond compare, enrobed by the seas!
There was *Dharmadatta*, and *Visakai*
The lovely-eyed daughter of his uncle.
They were very beautiful and appeared
Like veritable gods drawn by divine artistes.
Rumours flamed around that she had agreed
To be his mistress, being related.
Like a non-coloured drawing walking out
The beautiful *Visakai* left her home.
Entering the Assembly Hall, she cried:
'O statue on the pillar gleaming bright!
Relieve me of this great accusation!
The pillar-statue praised her, crying out:
'People of the city! She can cause rains!'
'If I had not got the gods on my side
This city would still believe in the wrong.
I would be my cousin's wife in the next birth.
This life will not see us married.' To her
Mother she proved her virtue and herself
Entered the nunnery. *Dharmadatta*
And his parents left *Pukar* city.
They praised in several ways the statue
On the pillar: 'You saved us indeed
From sorrows that sought to drown all of us.'
They later reached southern *Maturai,*
A prosperous city with good people.
Dharmadatta vowed to himself: 'I shan't
Marry any girl except *Visakai,*

My uncle's daughter with lovely tresses.
Let this life be spent thus!' Concentrating
On his trade, he earned enormous wealth.
As a rich man, he received the award
Of golden *etti* flower from the King.
Wealthy, he attained the age of sixty.
Once a brahmin spoke to him: 'What have you
Achieved here, rich man beyond compare?
Despite *dharmic* acts, a person sans wife
Cannot enter paradise: have you not
Heard of this saying? If you have, do not
Tarry here. Return to your town.'
Therefore the merchant returned to this place
Leaving South *Maturai* impoverished.
Having heard of his return, the golden
Visakai went to him from her convent.
The good woman, without being shy, went
In public to him who had eschewed wrong.
'We cannot recognise each other now.
Where is gone the beauty that made us love?
You are sixty years old. My tresses
Exuding scent, are now speckled with grey.
Where have youth and desire gone? O cousin
Whose mind is confounded! Tell me of that!
I shall not join you in this birth.
In my next, I shall serve you as wife.
Youth is fleeting: this body is mortal.
All the gathered wealth is impermanent.
Sons cannot assure us a place in heaven.
Dharma alone is a help for all time.
Perform charity!' *Dharmadatta*
Showed his enormous wealth to his cousin.
Helped by her he did many charities
Outnumbering the stars on the high skies.
As the wise spinster whose character
Had been cleared by the pillar-statue
Walked in public on the flags-waving road
The evil elder brother of the man
Who had been killed because of *Marudi*,
Lust-blind, wished to pull out the fresh garland

That was hanging from his dark, curly hair
So that he could place the string of flowers
On her and tell: 'this is the marriage
In secret praised by the poets of old!'
But the hand that tried to seize the garland
Could not be released from the black hair.
When *Kagandhan* heard: 'because of the maid
The hand cannot come down,' his anger blazed.
He cared not for his son's discomfiture.
He cut down and killed his son with a sword.
Our gracious King! May you guard the earth
Through ages after ages!"
Thus one of the sages spoke to him.
The King of pure and endless fame then asked:
"O wise sages! You spoke words of wisdom
Prefaced with a 'not this day alone.'
Do such happenings take place even now?"
When the King with the victory-spear asked so
One amongst the sages began to speak.
"May your royal sceptre be blameless!
Five are the evils condemned by wise men
On this earth. Of these, wine, untruth, stealing
And murder are always found along with
Lust. Only those who have given it up
May be said to have been freed from all evil.
Hence have all the great sages eschewed it.
O King of this vast earth! Those who cannot ·
Aren't they thrown into the flames of hell?
Madhavi of lovely eyes, the daughter
Of *Chitrapati*, shocked by her lover's death
Entered the refuge of *Buddhist* sages.
Her gentle daughter, *Manimekalai*,
With child-like breasts and speech, a child's prattle
Chose asceticism, begged from houses
Big and small, and reached the Assembly Hall.
Though her nature continued to be such
He followed her throughout as a shadow.
As he was filled with desire for the maid
He entered the Hall at dark, unafraid;
The maiden took *Kayachantikai's* form.

As *Kayachantikai* is also there,
Kayachantikai's spouse, a sword-wielding
Vidhyadhara appeared: this young man
Has come for her, he thought, impelled by fate.
O King with an umbrella that is moon-white!
As your son, *Udayakumaran*
Would not leave, fate got her on to the Hall,
And brought him also to the Assembly
At midnight, and invited the sword-wielding
Vidhyadhara, *Kayachantikai's* mate.
It confounded the *Vidhyadhara's* heart:
'This man has come for my *Vidhyadhara* lady.'
Further, fate went onwards to cut down
The Prince inside the Assembly Hall
Through the sword in the *Vidhyadhara's* hand."
Such was the news related by the sage
Looking on the face of the Army Chief
The King with the beautiful high crown said:
"The *Vidhyadhara* has done a wrong thing
As he presumed to usurp my action.
If the guardian is slack, there can be
No askesis, nor female chastity.
Before other kings come to know that
Such an evil son was born in this house
Which had once punished a Prince to guard
  the Law,
Put the young man on the funeral pyre
And place the courtesan's girl under guard."

Line 3.	they	: devotees who had come at dawn.
Line 5.	they	: the ascetics who lived in the Temple.
Lines 19-20.	The King need not feel self-reproachful as the cause for the first misdeed in the city.	

Line 25.	Virgin Goddess	: Sambapathi
Lines 26-27.	Lord	: Parasurama. Sage Parasurama, son of Jamadagni and wielder of the battle-axe, had taken a vow to destroy all the kshatriya kings as one of them had killed Jamadagni.
Line 30.	of whom	: Of Kagandhan
Line 32.	Kagandhan can retaliate swiftly	
Line 36.	Agastya	: a sage
Lines 45-46.	An echo of a Kural couplet, indited by Tiruvalluvar.	
Line 59.	truthful poet	: Tiruvalluvar
Lines 59-60.	A quotation from the Kural which attributes super--human powers to chaste ladies.	
Lines 72-73.	If the King does not take action in seven days, the Spirit would step in.	
Line 88.	non-coloured drawing	: a line drawing, not yet shaded with colours.
Line 113.	the golden etti flower	: the highest trade award.
Line 146.	Another son of Kagandhan	
Line 151.	her	: Visakai
Line 185.	he	: Udayakumaran
Line 191.	this young man	: Udayakumaran

Line 195. her : Manimekalai

Lines 212-213. Manu Needi Chola, an ancestor of the present King Mavankilli, had his son killed by a chariot-wheel, as the Prince's chariot-wheel had caused the death of a calf.

23. Released

(King *Mavankilli* sends wise *Vasantavai* to console the Queen. The Queen listens to her and dissembles her anger. She then takes *Manimekalai* to her residence and poisons her without success. She then sends a rogue to deflower the maid but *Manimekalai* takes on the form of a man which frightens away the intruder. The Queen denies her food, but the maid is able to overcome the pangs of hunger thanks to the chant taught by Goddess *Manimekala*. The Queen realises her folly and the maid tells her how mental delusion leads to evil results and speaks of the need to gain freedom from Ignorance. The Queen attains peace of mind at last).

Vasantavai, an old grey-haired lady
Could chase away sorrows that come upon
Kings, Princes, and Queens with rights to the earth
That grants prosperity, by means of words
Dipped in wisdom, of all that she had learnt.
And by explaining thoughtful messages.
Sent by the King, she speeded to the Queen
To console her. But she desisted from
Loud lamentations. She stood before the mistress
And saluted, spoke words of blessing.
"Death in war or when guarding one's people
Or when seizing the land of enemies
Or when placed on *darbha* grass and cut up
By sword with the chant, 'attain the way
Of the war-victor!': that is noble. My tongue
Is ashamed to praise royal deaths by old age!
How will your son's death be understood?
For guarding his King or defeating another?
Do not give expression to your grief
In front of the guardian-King!" She went.
The Queen hid her sorrowful heart within.
Dissembling her grief, seemingly normal
She vowed: "I shall bring *Manimekalai*
To grief!" One day she said to the King:

"Our Prince was unworthy of power
As he loved a nun whom others leave alone.
The maid was granted wisdom that rejects
Rare youth, rendering completely useless
Even Cupid with the sugarcane bow.
The prison is not a fit place for her."
They who are upright are the king's children.
"Those who are not, are best forgotten,"
He replied. "If you have realised this,
You can free the maiden from the prison."
"The young girl can stay with me if she wants.
Or else she can go out with her vessel.
None shall prevent her." Then the Queen took the girl
And went to her palace. "I shall confound
Her brain with madness so that this city's
People will throw stones at her." She poisoned
The maid who having known all her other births
Remained with an unconfused, clear brain.
The Queen tempted an illiterate brute
With money: "Go to *Manimekalai*,
Forcing yourself upon her, make marks
On her lovely youthful breasts and proclaim
That she has joined you in the love-act.
Go speak of this to all whom you may meet."
He went immediately to the place
That was lonely and where the maid was.
The girl recognised in this the evil
Hand of the Queen, and recited the chant
To take the appearance of a man.
Terrified by the looks of the stranger,
The black-mailer thought: "No man comes to the
Royal women's wing. I cannot fathom
What the hellish Queen wants." So he ran away.
"Shall I see her live, who caused my son's death?"
The Queen put the maiden in a stuffy dungeon.
"The maid is sick, she does not therefore eat food."
The chant to overcome hunger rescued
The lovely maid and kept her body strong.
Shocked and helplessly crying the Queen prayed:
"Unable to withstand my son's sad end

I have tortured you, O ascetic girl!
Lady like the wealth-goddess! Forgive me!"
"On the day when the fiery-eyed serpent
Killed *Rahulan* born to *Neelapathi*
And I entered the pyre as I was then
Unable to live on alone without him,
From which place did you lament for the Prince?
O gentle woman! You have done wrong.
Did you cry for the body? or for life?
If it was for the body, who were they
Who burnt him at the crematorium?
If it was for the life, you cannot know
Where it is reborn according to its past deeds.
If you have loved the life, then must you love
Every living thing, O gracious lady!
Besides, O great Queen, hear what the thief
Who killed your son did. As *Rahula*
Had cut down the cook who had slipped and smashed
The serving vessels, fate drank up his life
In the form of a poison-spewing snake
And killed him with the *Vidhyadhara's* sword.
You may ask: "How did you know all this past?
Here is my answer." Then the maiden
Told her all that had happened to her since
She entered the flower-garden upto
The time when she heard the statue speak.
Manimekalai spoke further: "You did
Poison me: but as I know of rebirth
I remained with a pure, unclouded mind.
When the illiterate brute came at night
I had taken a male form, O Queen!
Was it not due to the chant that kills hunger
That I escaped your evil designs?
But I have no desire to fly away
Nor impersonate. You had given birth
To my husband in the birth past. Therefore
I stayed to relieve you of the bleak past,
Help you to reject evil, eschew ignorance
That causes mental illusion. Hear me!
In a land confused by tyrannous rule

A housewife was deserted by her spouse.
Separated from her son, she journeyed
Far, where she lived as a public woman.
The boy was rescued by a good brahmin
Who brought him up without the mother's knowledge
The son did not know her as his mother,
Lived with her, and died when he learnt the truth.
A pregnant doe wandered in the forests
For water to quench its thirst. A hunter's
Fatal arrow pierced through its stomach.
He ran to it as it fell crying out
And was overcome by its shedding tears
From lovely red eyes, breathing hard throughout.
The sender of the arrow killed himself.
Have you heard of that, O lovely-eyed Queen!
Drunkards are gored to death by the white tusks
Of elephants in rut, as they insist
To walk in front of the dread animals.
Is it not due to the frenzy of drink?
Has anyone leading a life of lies
Crossed the deep ocean of endless sorrow?
As for those who use the plough of stealing,
They but attain misery. These evils
Give only sorrow to human beings.
We must eschew them. Mere scholarship
Is not enough, O Lady! Only those
Who give up anger have attained knowledge.
Only those who help people in distress
May be said to be truly living on this earth.
They alone know the pathway to release
Who feed people suffering from hunger.
The wise who have known the ultimate truth
Shower their love on all living creatures.
As she sprinkled the waters of knowledge
Pouring the nectar into the good Queen's ears,
She put out the inner fire that had burnt
The wood of mind by the flame of the son's loss.
As water treated with clearing-nut,
The queen's mind became crystalline: she saluted
The maid who, however, did not accept it.

"This is not right, you gave birth to my husband.
Also, you are the consort of the King."
The maid in turn, saluted her and stood.

Line 13. The reference is to an ancient custom of placing the body of kings who had died of old age on a bed of grass and cutting the body into two by a sword with a prayer that he may attain the same veera-swarga (the Heavens of the Heroes) attained by those who fall in the battlefield.

Line 52. the chant : the chant taught by Goddess Manimekala that would help the girl assume the form she wanted. See Canto 10.

Line 57. The black-mailer began to suspect the Queen's fidelity.

Line 71. Where was the Queen in that earlier birth to lament Rahulan's death, that she should weep for his end now?

Lines 74-75. The servants were actually carrying out the orders of the royal parents to cremate the son's body. Why did she not prevent it, if she thought the body was immortal?

Line 98 ff. Even as she had used two of the chants to save herself by changing her form and keeping herself from hunger, Manimekalai could have made use of the third chant that enables her to fly in the air. But she chose to remain a willing prisoner of the Queen as she desired to remove the veil of Ignorance that had been deluding the elder woman's mind.

24. Towards Aaputhran's Kingdom

(Chitrapati comes to the Queen to take back her grand-daughter *Manimekalai* and tells her about the King's union with the unknown *Naga* Princess, *Peelivalai* and how their son is being brought up in a distant island. *Chitrapati's* artful words do not disturb the Queen and she refuses to part with the maid. Sage *Aravana, Madhavi* and *Sutamati* now come to the Queen. The Sage imparts them spiritual counsel. *Manimekalai* seeks the Queen's permission to move to other places for engaging herself in charitable works. She then flies in the air and reaches *Nagapuram*, the country ruled over by *Punyarajan.)*

The old courtesan who had made the Prince
Desire the maid, heard with shock that he
Who had followed her plan had been destroyed
By the *Vidhyadhara's* sword. Sorrowing,
She went to get *Madhavi's* daughter freed,
Fell at the Queen's feet and spoke in detail.
"The eleven damsels given to *Indra*
By ladies possessing snake-like graces:
The five who were caused to be born on earth
When their dance before *Indra* was found wrong:
The hundred and four women with his son
Cursed by the sage: also one belonging
To my tribe, *Urvasi* who had been cursed
In the court of *Indra*, with shining crown.
None of these one hundred and twenty-one
Ladies had cause to suffer as grievously
As me, since the founding of this city.
O gracious Queen! I have been hurt the most.
Madhavi's going to a nunnery
When she heard that her keeper had died:
The danseuse with a begging bowl in hand
Went to all homes and received charity.
Women of the dancing community
Laugh, and do not accept such goings on.
It is not only the Prince, but this town

Is also in danger due to the maid!
In the cork-tree forests on the beach
With high sand-dunes and close to salt-beds,
Where *Killi* with the gleaming crown walked
Mid a flower-garden spreading the pride
Of the spring-season, appeared a girl,
All by herself, on one side of the place.
'Who is this that comes?' the King wondered.
Helplessly, he fell in a swoon of love.
Struck by the arrow of Cupid which has
The seasonals, jasmine, lotus, mango,
Lily and Asoka blossoms that work through
The eyes, the ears, the lips, the nose,
And the body enjoyed by embraces,
He who had defeated many in wars
Now became her slave. A month passed by.
She did not declare herself. In the end
That maid like a flower-creeper, vanished.
The scourge of enemies now went searching
For her: 'Ah! Whither has she hid herself?'
A *charana* who can go below earth,
Rise in the skies and walk on water, appeared.
The King saluted him and requested:
'My beloved has hid herself here.
Have you seen her, O sage? Kindly tell me.'
To the King he replied: 'I have not seen.
But I have known that young lady before.
King, listen. *Valaivanan* with the spear
Of victory, who rules the *Naga* land
With kindness, had a daughter born
To his Queen, *Vasamayilai:* the day
Day when *Peelivalai* was born, the royal
Astrologer said: 'She will be with child
By a King belonging to the solar race.'
That son will come to you. But the maiden
Will not. Do not grieve. Remember Goddess
Manimekala's words that this city
Will be completely engulfed by the sea
If the festival of *Indra* is not
Performed. *Indra's* curse cannot be repealed.

O scourge of the foes! Remember as sure
The end of the city and the royalty.
Never forget to celebrate *Indra's*
Festival, lest the sea eat up *Pukar!'*
Since the day the sage parted with these words
The citizens have not been free of dread.
O Queen! I am worried that if the maid
Who carries that name is put to trouble
The Goddess may return to wreak vengeance!
Give back to my house the danseuse whose mind
Has changed." The King's consort then spoke to her
"The wise have rejected as sin untruth,
Wine, lust, murder and the desire to steal.
Your way of life based on these five paths
Has been given up by the maid, know this.
She will not come with you to your house.
Henceforth she will stay with me." Thus the Queen.
Madhavi heard of *Manimekalai's*
State; her heart was confused as the waters
Of a lake struck by dust. She then spoke to
Sutamati, shook like a wind-swept creeper,
Bowed at *Aravana's* feet, and with him
Came to the Queen. On the sage's approach
The Queen, her serving maids, *Chitrapati*
And *Madhavi's* daughter received him,
Saluting at the feet of the great sage
With their bejewelled hands. He blessed them:
'May you gain knowledge!' Then the gracious Queen
With her jewelled hands showed the ascetic
A proper seat, washed his feet with water
And did the honours. "My good fortune
Has brought you here, grieving your feet
That has seen many decades. Your voice
Remains fresh though the body has grown old
And tired. May you live for long!" She praised.
"Lady, hear me. Though I have followed
An ascetic's life, I am now like the
Setting sun. Birth, ageing, sickness, death.
This is a natural law. Hear this.
The twelve conditions of existence are:

Ignorance, action, consciousness, subtle form,
The senses, feeling, experience, desire,
Attachment, life, appearance and fate.
They who know this, gain realisation.
Else, they only know the dark depths of hell.
'What is ignorance?' It is not knowing
These mentioned above, and getting confused
About the nature of what is seen
And even accept that a hare has horns.
The world of living among the three worlds
Has countless species. The six-fold life has
Humans, gods, *Brahmas*, denizens of Hell,
Animal species and the spirit worlds.
Lives, according to their good or bad fate
Are born in one of these forms and work out
Their fate: accordingly, lives gain happiness
Or suffer pain as the case may be.
'What is evil fate?' If this question comes,
O good woman, hear about it all.
Within the untrembling body there come
The desire to kill, to steal and to lust.
Four evils grow from untruth, backbiting,
Harsh words and purposeless speech: from the heart
Rise up greed, anger and illusory
Feelings. People with discrimination
Know these ten evils and avoid the same.
If they follow the evils, they take birth
As animals, spirits, or hell's minions
And find themselves in pain and confusion.
'What is a good birth?' To such a question:
By avoiding the ten evils above,
And holding to discipline and charity
They are born among the three best: godheads,
Humans and *Brahmas:* and living as such
They reap the results as an endless bliss.
O bejewelled ladies with our Queen!
Listen only to faultless good *dharma*.
Manimekalai who knows about rebirth,
After you have learnt of other doctrines
I shall teach you in detail about this

And its many divisions. O maiden
With pearly teeth!" Saying this he got up.
The maiden rose and saluted the sage.
"O Queen, waiting maids and *Chitrapati!*
Be saved by cogitating on the sage's words.
If I stay in this city any more
People will say: she caused the Prince's end.
After going to *Aaputhran's* country
I shall pray at pure *Manipallavam.*
Go to *Vanji* and the Chaste Lady
And perform good deeds everywhere.
Do not worry about my safety.
My dear ones!" She saluted them all.
In the evening when the sun vanished
Like molten gold, the maiden saluted
The Assembly Hall, the temple of the Goddess,
The bright pillar, and went right-wards.
She then flew high in the air and came down
In a garden of the city ruled by
Indra's nephew; she rested there awhile.
Saluting a sage who was there, she asked:
"What is this city's name? Who is the King
Who rules over it?" The good sage replied.
"This is *Nagapuram*. It is ruled by
Punyarajan, son of *Bhumichandran.*
Since the day he was born in this city
The rains from high skies have never failed us.
The land and the trees give generously.
No life here has the hunger-sickness."
Thus the sage in the flower-filled garden
Spoke about the King with lovely garlands.

Line 1. old courtesan : Chitrapati

Line 8. The damsels were so supple in their movements.

Line 11. his son : Indra's son, Jayanthan

Line 20.	her keeper	: Kovalan
Line 21.	danseuse	: Manimekalai
Line 26.	Chitrapati recounts the story of a forecast which had said that King Mavankilli would give up the performance of the Indra Festival resulting in the destruction of Kaveri-p-poompattinam.	
Line 44.	scourge of enemies	: King Mavankilli
Line 46.	charana	: a Buddhist sage who has attained supra-normal powers.
Line 73.	that name	: the name of Goddess Manimekalai.
Line 105.	The twelve conditions of existence are usually termed in Buddhist theology as ignorance, action, consciousness, name-form, sense-organs, sensuous feelings, experience, thirst, attachment, existence, birth, and disease.	
Line 155.	chaste lady	: Kannaki. This refers to the statue of Kannaki erected in Vanji.
Line 165.	Indra's nephew	: i.e. of Indra's line. Here Punyarajan.

25. With Aaputhran to Manipallavam

(King *Punyarajan* who happens to come to the royal garden, sees *Manimekalai* and enquires about her. *Manimekalai* herself asks *Punyarajan* to come to *Manipallavam* and she reaches the island first by flying in the air. The Seat of *Buddha* reveals Sage *Brahmadharma* and the maid recalls his words of spiritual teaching in the earlier birth. In the meantime *Punyarajan* learns from the Queen Mother all about his strange birth and desires to renounce the kingdom. The minister *Janamithran* pacifies him and assures him that his presence is a must for the prosperity of the country. The King goes to *Manipallavam* for a brief visit. He learns of his past from the Seat of *Buddha*. He gains peace of mind. Goddess *Dipatilakai* shows them the bleached bones of *Aaputhran* and his compatriots in a corner of the beach. She also gives *Manimekalai* the dire news of *Pukar's* ruin by the sea. As advised by the Goddess, *Manimekalai* goes to *Vanji*. *Punyarajan* returns to his kingdom).

The King entered the garden with his Queen
And bowed at the feet of the Buddhist sage.
From him he heard of *dharma*, sin, of things
Mortal, the reason thereof, sorrow, how
The lives reach new places, the twelve causes,
The path to Release and of *Buddha's* peace.
"Who is this lovely girl with no equal
Whose eyes do not move in tune with desire,
Who listens to *dharma* here with a
Vessel in her hand?" The King asked. To him
Saluted and replied an official:
"Our *Jambu* continent has none to equal
This maid: when I had gone with ships
To the good city close to *Kaveri*
Seeking the friendship of King *Killi*,
The sage *Aravana* spoke of her life
And I had repeated this to you then.
O King with honey-dripping garlands!

This is she; she has left that lovely town
And come here." Listening to all this
The maid spoke: "The vessel in your hand
Has now reached me: sunk in riches you are
Ignorant. Not that past nor the present
Life as a cow-born do you know of. What have you
  done?
You will not learn of the nature of birth
That brings attachment unless you go to
Manipallavam: hence, come there, O King!"
Having said this to the King, the maiden
Rose in the spotless sky. Before the sun
Sank in the West, she came down to the earth,
And then walked around *Manipallavam's*
Wave-girt beaches scented all over with
Fresh blossoms. Coming upon the holy
Seat of *Buddha* who destroys attachments
She saluted. The jewelled Seat began
To vision clearly her entire past.
Looking upon the just sage on the banks
Of the river *Kayankarai,* she bowed.
"To those who came with King *Athipathi*
Eager to hear of *dharma,* you spoke
With your tongue as stick and mouth as drum:
'Give up evil deeds that lead to birth as
Animals, hell's denizens and spirits:
By this, you become gods, men and *Brahma.*
Then you perform good deeds without stopping.
One shall be born who knows all about Truth
By his All-Knowledge, to save the whole world.
Except those who hearken to his *dharma*
The rest cannot escape sorrowing birth.
Take to *dharma* ere inescapable
Death gathers you up!' Hearing those words
We saluted you. Then did you tell us
Words of dire import. And so I asked you.
'Why did *Indra* place this illustrious
Seat before *Buddha* incarnated? And
Why does this great Seat tell me all about
My births past?' 'This pure Seat will not accept

Any one except all-knowing *Buddha.*
Till this Seat accepts, the lord of the gods
Will not salute *Buddha.* The same *Indra*
Built this Seat for the Great One and proclaimed:
'Let this Seat of *Dharma* speak to mortals
About their births past.' Therefore will the Seat
Clearly show the past births of the maid!'
Such your message that day! In that wise
The sage's words are coming true today."
Speaking in this manner, she praised the Seat
And remained praying. The King there returned
From the garden to the city. And then
Through his mother *Amarasundari*
He heard of his father, a sage, mother
A cow, and how by the great sage's grace
He was born in a golden egg unbound
By umbilical cord, and how by that
Sage's love the childless *Bhumichandra*
Took him amd brought him up. Hearing this
The King was exceedingly sorrowful.
He thought of his mother's deed in the past
And the manner in which he got the present birth.
"With kings waiting to gain my audience
For redress, me patronising scholars,
Watching dramas, listening to music
Sweetly tuned, enjoying the mock anger
Of my queens, bowing at their feet circled
By anklets, drawing *kumkum* marks on their breasts,
Decorating their dark ringlet tresses
With my own hands, quaffing the sweet honey
Springing from in between their lovely teeth,
Losing myself in the proud heady wine
Of love-play as Cupid let fly his darts
Reddening the dark eyes on moon-like faces.
Such my life. Better to renounce all this."
As the King of the renowned royalty
Spoke thus saying, "the seed sowed by the sage
In my ears sprouted faultlessly
Today because of *Manimekalai,"*
Minister *Janamithran* recognised

The King's change of heart. So he bowed and said:
"Hail, or lord! Please listen to my words.
Prior to your father gaining you,
This country with cities, for twelve years
Had no rains, causing widespread loss of life.
The mother had no pity for her child
And ate all by herself the food she got.
As rain-bearing clouds in the hot summer
You appeared, King with flower-garlands!
After your appearance, the rains
Did never fail. The earth was generous.
Living beings knew not hunger's torture.
When you go away, your whole country
Will weep like a child that lost its mother.
If you do not guard the earth from sorrow
And seek the supreme life of salvation,
You would have got what you wanted only
By the death of living beings in this land, O King!
This is not the *dharma* preached by *Buddha*,
Who cares not for himself, but looks after
All other lives. How come you think what is
Against your intelligence?" The King
Listened to wisdom and said: "My desire
To see *Manipallavam* will not slake.
Yours the duty to guard for a month
This kingdom, my women and citizens!"
Calling upon ship-makers, he reached the beach
Drummed by ocean waves, and embarked a ship.
Not tarrying in any place, the ship
Went straight to *Manipallavam* island.
The maiden with faultless knowledge came there,
Recognised the King's ship and was happy.
With the King she went around the island
That had flowering gardens swept by waves.
"Noble lord! Look. This is the *Dharma* Seat
That visions past births," she pointed out.
The King went around and prayed. To the King
The jewelled Seat showed his past births just as
A spotless mirror held in hand reflects
The face of the onlooker. "I know my

Past birth. I am relieved of my sorrows.
O Goddess of Knowledge in southern *Maturai*
In Tamil land! There came to me, a beggar,
Some hungry people on a rainy night
During the darkness. In that public hall
I grew sad, unable to offer them food.
'Even if the country should be stricken by drought
This vessel will not grow empty. Pine not!
Take this!' So saying you gave the nectar pot
And cut the bonds of my birth, O Goddess!
Appearing in our consciousness
You teach the Truth'. O glowing Goddess, hail!
The noble feet that cleanses the evil
Tongue, be it of gods or *Brahmas*, I praise
In all my births, nor shall I ever forget,
O Mother!" Thus he prayed. Then along with
Manimekalai he went south-west wards
And reached the wave-kissed banks of *Gomukhi*
Lake. They rested beneath a *Pinnai* tree,
Giving shade. The guardian deity
Of the island was pleased to see the maid
Along with *Aaputhran*. She drew near.
"O noble man who dispelled hunger
With the food in your hand! You have come.
Those who had left you then came back
Later. Learning of your fate they too
Gave up their lives. Look on the bones of those
Nine merchants! Those bones again belong to
Their companions who shared their board
And later died of sorrow. As the sand
Gathered by waves grown into tall dunes for covering,
Under the cool shades of blooming *Pinnai*
The bones of others who gave their lives
Lovingly to the King lie. Look. You did kill
Yourself; you caused the death of others
Who came pitying your condition.
Are you not a killer? You are a King!
O jewel among women who carries
The vessel praised by many! Your town
Has entered the sea. Listen to the cause.

Peelivalai, daughter of the *Naga* King,
Best among womenkind, came here with
Her son born to the solar dynasty.
As she went around the island, praying
To the great Seat established by *Indra*,
A *Kambala* merchant's ship drew anchor.
She went to him and learnt of his motherland.
'Please hand over this child to your king!'
She requested him. The merchant received
The boy with immeasurable pleasure,

Saluted the noble prince, and later
Left the port. The same night when he started
On the journey, the ship was wrecked on the
Shores of the ocean. Those who did escape
Went to King *Killi* with the shining lance,
And told him about the loss of his son.
The King was inconsolable by the son's loss.
Like a snake that had lost its jewel
He searched all over mountains and sea-shores.
The city forgot *Indra's* festival.
Goddess *Manimekala* was angered.
She cursed: 'Let the beautiful sea be
Destroyed by the sea!" *Pukar* was ruined.

As the sea flowed over the large city
Like *Indra* with long lance-wielding hands,
The King departed from thence all alone.
Uprising waves engulfed noble *Pukar*.
Your mothers along with the great sage
Entered *Vanji* without any trouble.
The guardian of the sea praised by many
Told me this. If you wish to hear more
Of how Goddess *Manimekala* saved

Your ancestor who then performed there
The best of *dharmas*, go to *Aravana*
At *Vanji*, O maid with knowledge!" And then
The Goddess of the island flew away.
Saddened, the King with *Manimekalai*
Dug up the thick sand dunes. There lay exposed
The bones of his earlier cultured birth

Separated now from flesh, shrunk in size,
Bleached and yet remaining in the manner
He had left. Looking upon this body
The King became faint. *Manimekalai*
Came to him. "What ails you who wear garlands!
I came to your country to invite you here
Only to make you full aware
Of your past, and make your name known
In these small and large islands. When the kings
Of the earth take to a life of *dharma*,
What better way to save the world from evil?
If you ask what is *dharma*, hear this.
Forget not! No greater good deed is there
Than to give mankind food, clothes and shelter!"
The King replied: Be it in my country
Or in other lands, I shall do *dharma*
As you teach. O lady! You have made me
Aware of my past and made me new-born.
I shall not bear separation from you!"
"Do not grieve. Your large, noble country
Saddened by parting, will cry loud for you.
You return by ship. I go to *Vanji*."
So saying, the maid rose high in the skies.

Line 1. the King : Punyarajan

Line 2. the sage : Dharmasavaka who resided in the garden.

Line 14. The reference is to Kaveri-p-poompattinam.

Line 21. your hand : the hands of the King in an earlier birth as Aaputhran.

Line 23. i.e. Neither the past birth as Aaputhran, son of the adulteress Sali nor the present birth from the womb of a cow.

Line 37.	just sage	: Brahmadharma
Line 41.	i.e. with authority	
Line 53.	words of dire import	: the prediction that Athipathi's capital will be destroyed within a few days.
Line 59.	lord of the gods	: Indra
Line 68.	The King there	: Punyarajan in Nagapuram
Line 71.	sage	: Manmugan
Line 78.	mother's deed in the past	: Sali's adultery
Line 79.	manner	: being hatched from an egg.
Line 80 ff.	Punyarajan gives way to self-pity.	
Line 94.	the sage	: Dharmasavaka
Line 98.	change of heart	: the king's desire to renounce secular life and embrace spiritual life.
Lines 103-104.	Indicates the acuteness of the drought.	
Line 112 ff.	Janamithran speaks of the Bodhisattva ideal which rejects personal salvation when the rest of the world remains to be saved.	
Line 128.	the maid	: Manimekalai
Lines 139-140	Goddess of Knowledge	: Chinta Devi

Line 157.	guardian deity	: Dipatilakai
Lines 162-164.	The fellow-merchants died because of remorse, having caused Aaputhran's death unwittingly.	
Line 166.	companions	: friends and servants fed by the Nine merchants.
Line 176.	your town	: Kaveri-p-poompattinam
Line 177.	entered the sea has been overrun by the sea.	
Line 180.	solar dynasty	: the Chola dynasty
Line 184.	motherland	: The Chola country
Line 194.	Killi had but recently lost his elder son, Udaya-kumaran.	
Line 203.	the King	: Mavankilli
Line 207.	guardian of the sea	: Goddess Manimekala
Line 209.	your ancestor	: An ancestor of Kovalan was saved by the Goddess; Kovalan named his daughter after the Goddess to express his gratitude.
Line 221.	Manimekalai consoles the King and frees him from the shock of recognising his part.	
Line 234.	Literally it is a new birth for the King, as he is now going to lead a life of charitable works.	
Line 236.	Manimekalai gently reminds Punyarajan that the parting of ways has come for this birth.	

26. Entering the City of Vanji

(*Manimekalai* reaches *Vanji* and worships the images of *Kovalan* and *Kannaki*. *Kannaki* appears before her and tells her about the past life of *Kovalan* and what the future is going to be. *Manimekalai* then put on the form of an ascetic and enters the city of *Vanji*).

The maid traversed the skies to the city,
Eager to see her mother, *Kannaki*
Of immense love, and father *Kovalan*
The charitable, who were now sculpted
As statues invested with divinity.
"Not seeking the duty of love, nor of
Renunciation, you took to the path
Of stern chastity for life's fulfilment.
Tell me why," she cried, praying in front
Of their images. The great chaste Goddess said:
"When *Maturai* was burnt by my anger
Due to the evil that had struck my lord,
Goddess *Maturapathi* appeared.
'This has been due to your evil past.
Vasu and *Kumaran* were agnate kings
Of *Kalinga* country with great gardens.
Simhapura and *Kapila* were their
Capitals: they battled amongst themselves.
Between the cities a stretch of sixty
Miles lay deserted, unapproached by man.
Eager to make money *Sangaman* brought
Jewels secretly, and with his wife went
To *Simhapura*. He was detected
And reported upon. Your husband
Bharathan, a cruel official of the King,
Caught him, and accusing him as a spy
To the King, had the innocent man
Condemned to death. There his wife lamented
Pitifully and went to a hill-top
Getting ready to die. Her curses then
Have now borne result. The evil of past
Will inexorably chase the doer.'

Even after she had told me this truth
I destroyed this city by my anger!
Our good past has led us to heavens.
At the close of that, the result of this
Evil act will certainly follow us.
When there is no more refuge in heavens
Several births on earth and suffering
Good and bad effects: like you, we shall swim
In the sea of life, struggling with birth and death.
In *Magadha* where the rains never fail
Is a town hailed by elders as its *tilak*,
Kapilavastu famed for its beauty.
Here the noble Sun of *Buddha* shall rise
Brimming with the ten strengths that lead beyond,
And sitting under the *Bodhi* tree teach
The faultless noble four-fold truths
And the twelve conditions of existence,
Teaching us the way to destroy them all
And then gain release from the three evils.
Thus will the Lord spread the rays of *dharma*
All over the vast spaces of the world.
Maid! As I had prayed with your father
At the seven *Indra*-seats of *Buddha*,
We will escape rebirth in lower forms
And listen to his words with loving hearts.
Our mind led to asceticism,
We will reach the state of beyonding birth.
But even then, for a long time to come
We will help all people to gain release.
O maid with scented tresses! You too shall
Go into this ancient city
And hear the way of different creeds.
After you recognise their falsity
You shall follow *Buddha's Pithaka* Way.
These will now happen," explained the mother.
"Taking you to be immature, no one
Will teach you the creeds. Don another form!"
The maid took the form of an ascetic
Thanks to the chant given by the Goddess.
She then reached a place close to the fort wall

Filled by temples, stages, hermitages,
Flowering gardens and lakes where there were
Holy sages, realised souls, and scholars
Of ancient books showing the good path.
The upright King *Senguttuvan* at his
Vanji city, with his battle heroes
Wearing *Vanji* flowers on their hair-knots,
Making all countries he traversed look like
Mountain land due to the large elephants.
Chariots, horses and brave infantry
Went like the loud sea in the rainy season
Resting on the banks of the great Ganges.
They crossed to the north bank by means of ships
Defeated *Kanaka*, *Vijaya* and
Other kings, placed a Himalayan stone
Of holiness on their golden crowns while
The *Chera* decorated his tresses
With golden *sirissa* for victory.
As the time had come for her to reap good
And make clear the noble four-fold truths
The maid reached the golden city named
To spread the fame of the brave, heroic King.

Line 1.	the maid	: Manimekalai
Line 6.	duty of love	: dying along with the beloved as sati.
Line 7.	renunciation	: taking up a widow's way of life.
Line 10.	the great chaste Goddess	: Kannaki
Line 13.	Maturapathi	: Guardian of the city of Matura. Her description is the same as that of Shiva's consort, Parvati.

		Incidentally, Parvati as Meenakshi is the presiding deity of Matura.
Line 46.	The ten strengths	: the ten Paramitas which characterise the Enlightened One. They are Dana, Seela, Kshama, Veerya, Dhyana, Prajna, Upaya, Daya, Bala and Jnana.
Line 48.	four-fold noble truths	: suffering, cause of suffering, mitigation of suffering and way to mitigate suffering.

Line 55. The reference is to the Seats built by Indra in Pukar for charanas to use when expounding the tenets of Buddhism. Opinion has been expressed about this being a historical person, Mahendra, the brother of Asoka who is said to have built many Buddhist viharas in Pukar.

See S.N. Kandaswamy, Buddhism as Expounded in Manimekalai, p.3.

Line 63.	This ancient city	: Vanji

Line 66. Pithaka is literally 'a basket.' The Buddhist scriptures have a three-fold division : Vinaya Pithaka, Sutra Pithaka and Abhidharma Pithaka. These again, have numerous sub-divisions.

Line 71.	Goddess	: Goddess Manimekala

Line 81. Because of the large number of elephants in the King's army, the places looked like mountainous regions, for elephants are found in large numbers in mountains.

Line 86.	Kanaka, Vijaya	: Aryan Kings
Lines 87-88.	Himalayan stone of holiness	: as the stone had been selected from the Himalayas to sculpt the statue of Kannaki, the Goddess of Chastity. The sculpture was meant for installation in a temple and worship.

27. Listening to the Philosophers

(In *Vanji* city, *Manimekalai* goes by turn to logicians, Saivites, *Brahmavadins*, *Vaishnavites*, Vedic philosophers, *Ajivakas*, *Nirgranthas*, *Sankhyas*, *Vaiseshikas* and *Bhutavadins* and hears them explain their respective philosophies. In the end she expresses her dissatisfaction with their expositions and says that inference is of prime importance in the realisation of Truth).

"Teach me the faultless truth", she requested,
Drawing close to the philosophers there.
She met a Vedic logician at first
And said: "Speak to me of your doctrine."
"*Veda Vyasa*, *Kritakoti*, flawless
Jaimini were the three teachers who well
Formulated logical instruments
As ten, eight and six respectively,
The nature of things has to be found out
By direct perception and inference,
Similitude, authority, presumption,
Appropriateness, tradition, as also
Negation, correlation and occurrence.
There are five reasons for clear perception.
The form of things through sight, sound through ears,
Smell by the closeness of the nose, taste through tongue,
And the sense of touch through our body
Are these: such seeing, hearing, smelling
Eating and feeling tells us of sorrow
And joy: when life, the sense organs and mind
Conjoin with light, true perception sans
Exclusion, error and doubt of the object
Occurs as the appropriate place, name,
Genus, quality and also action.
The logic of inference is to deduct
The true nature of the inferable.
This is by three ways: through what is common,

From effect to cause and cause to effect.
The 'common' is when the means and its cause
Are absent without an interaction:
The trumpeting of an elephant in rut
Makes one think: 'Here is a pachyderm.'
When seeing floods one decides upon rains
At the catchment, that be from effect to cause.
When seeing dark clouds we say, 'it will rain.'
That is inferring from cause to effect.
To realise the unseen through the seen
By means of any one of these causes
In relation to past, present and future
With the thing clearly seen by knowledge.
Similitude comes through comparison
Of a wild cow with a domestic cow.
Authority comes through classical texts
That tell us of paradise and hell.
'The village is on the Ganges,' we are told
But presumption points out to the bank.
Appropriateness is recognised when
The elephant-rider is given the goad.
Tradition comes from racial memory
Making us believe: 'This tree has a ghost.'
Negation is the non-apprehension
Of an unrelated thing after search.
Correlation tells us of *Ravana's*
Defeat when *Rama* is said to have won.
Occurrence tells of a magnet's presence
When a stick of iron revolves around.
Fallacious knowledge is of eight kinds.
Through direct contact, misconception, doubt,
Wrong conviction, seeing without belief,
Wrong assertion, knowing of what is known,
And assumption. Of these, direct contact
Stops with the admission of an object.
Misconception is taking one for another
As seeing silver in the mother-of-pearl.
Doubt rises out of unsettled thinking
As when we say: 'Is that a pillar or a man?'
Wrong conviction takes place when a pillar

In a field is mistaken for a man.
Not recognising an evil tiger
That draws close, is seeing without belief.
Wrong assertion is to say, 'a rabbit
Has horns.' Words alone create this effect.
Knowing of what is known is to suggest:
'Fire's warmth is the antidote to winter.'
Assumption is acceptance of statements
From others as: 'These are your parents.'
These are the systems that accept logic:
Lokayata, Buddhism, the *Sankhya.*
Nyaya, Vaiseshika and *Mimamsa.*
The teachers of these six: *Brihaspati,*
Buddha, Kapila and *Akshapada,*
Kanada and *Jaimini.* At present
The six systems of logic in use are
Through perception, inference, the *Shastras,*
Analogy, presumption and negation."
She left him. Meeting a Saivite who said
'God is *Iswara*', she asked him: "Of what
Nature is your divine, praised by you?"
"He is the life and body of the eight
Known as the Sun, the Moon, the Doer and
The five elements. The form of scriptures.
As if in play he deals with creation.
His grace removes the sorrows of our birth.
He has nothing beyond his own body.
Such is our Lord," replied the Saivite.
"The entire universe was born out of
The egg of God," said one of that sect.
"*Narayana* guards us," the Vaishnavite
Said, lovingly reciting *Vishnu's* tales.
"Ritual for hands, prosody for feet,
Astronomy for eyes, Etymology
For ears, Articulation for nose,
And Grammar for face; such is the Veda
Self-born with neither beginning nor end."
She heard the advocate of Veda speak
And felt: "What these people speak of systems
And usage do not hold together."

Going to a Jain scholar she queried:
"Who is your God? What do your Books say?"
"Our God pervades all things all the time
Everywhere, and looms as limitless
Knowledge. This system has five-fold subjects
Along with firm life, the four elements:
To feel that life-atom through touch and sight
They combine and divide among themselves.
Four elements, earth, water, fire and wind
Come together as hills, trees or bodies.
They also divide and disintegrate.
The knowledge of this process is called life.
Earth atoms are solid: water atoms
Cool and tasty, flow downwards and then soak
Underground: the fire atoms by nature
Emit heat and rise upwards all the time.
Wind atoms pass through space to cause movement.
Though these sub-atoms take various forms
They are beginningless, they are not harmed,
Nor are they destroyed. There is no birth
Of new atoms, nor do they enter others.
Ancient water atoms are not changed
To earth atoms. Nor are they fragmented.
Nor do they spread water like flattened rice.
They move, flow downwards, and move upwards too.
They may come together as a mountain
Then become separate to be themselves.
They may gather as a very strong tree,
A bamboo with holes and a seed that grows.
Also as the round earth like a full moon.
As elements, these atoms decrease not
Nor do they come together as the whole.
As one, three-fourths, half or quarter they mix
And get their names by the majority content.
Unless they gather in this proportion
They will not assume the forms of hard earth
Fluid water, burning fire, swinging wind
And gain the respective capacities.
The realised souls alone see atoms.

Others cannot see the reality
Within elements, even as a separate strand of hair
Is not seen on the head in the twilight
People who are born after their past deeds
In births black, blue black, green, red, gold and white
In the end attain the state of non-birth
By going through the birth of pure whiteness.
Those who do not want a life of sorrows
Deserve birth in the life of pure whiteness.
This is the nature of the righteous path.
That which is contrary to this manner,
Know that as the way of retrogression.
Gain and loss, the coming of obstacles,
The inevitability of these,
Sorrow and joy, their riddance, birth and death:
All these originate even in womb.
Joy and sorrow are also atomic.
It is past fate that works in later births.
This is the teaching in *Markali's* Book."
The maid gave up these confused arguments
And approached a *Nigrantha* ascetic.
"Who is your Lord? What are your Books?
Explain to me the waves of the teaching,
Its argument and conclusion." He began to speak.
"Whom the *Indras* salute is our God.
His systems are: the Movement Principle,
The Principle of Stationariness,
Time, the sky, faultless life and sub-atoms,
Good deeds and bad, and also the bondage
That comes of these, and Release mark these ten.
A thing may remain as it is expounded in
This teaching: or it may grow different
By association. Eternal or
Impermanent be, and in a moment
Through knowledge appear, exist or die,
The three-fold states that can never be changed.
A margosa seed's sprouting and growth
Is eternal: the seed's withering tells us
Of the temporal. Even as the green gram

Disappears when made into a sweet.
The Movement Principle pervades all through
Making things function in keeping with their nature.
Such too the Stationary Principle
Which makes everything remain static.
Time is of the nature that makes a brief
Moment and also the immense *Kalpa*.
The sky gives space for all created things
And allows them to spread as they wish to.
Life resides in the body and helps it
To enjoy taste and other sensations.
An atom is the body and other
Forms leading to good and also bad deeds.
To change the path of these, experience
The result of deeds and cut off bondage
Is realisation." Following him
Another spoke saying: "This is *Sankhya*.
The primary element is the things
Which is beyond conception: it has three
Qualities, is above mind, is the one Source
From which begin all created things.
From consciousness rises *Maan* or *Buddhi*,
From it emanates space, and from that air,
Here appears fire and from it springs
The nature of water. Ultimately
From this rises earth. A combination
Of all these gives birth to the mind. That mind
Bustles to give rise to the ego sense,
The space creates sounds heard by the ear,
The wind generates the feeling of touch,
The fire gives light seen by the eye
The water leads to taste for the tongue
And the earth gives the sense of smell for nose.
These spoken above become work-organs
As speech, hands, feet, anus and organ
For generation. The transformation
Of elements thus appears as hill,
Tree and others, to become the wide earth,
And return by their way to merge within
An endless dissolution. Till that happens

It is spread everywhere, eternal.
The *Purusha*, easy to know, without
The three qualities, not related to
The five senses, not the place for the growth
Of creation, but the means of knowing
All that, the one spreading everywhere,
Is eternal, the consciousness within.
We become conscious of Twenty-five things.
Earth, water, fire, wind and the immense space;
Body, mouth, eyes, nose and the ear; taste
Light, touch, sound and the sense of smell;
speech, hands,
Feet, anus and generative organs;
Mind, *buddhi*, ego-sense and will-power,
Along with Atman that is life, the count
Is complete. Thus she heard his description.
"O *Vaiseshika!* Speak your doctrine!"
She said. "Six-fold the system that contains
Faultless substance, quality, action and
Genus, species and collectivity.
Of these, substance has quality and action
Causing everything. That has nine heads.
Earth, water, fire, wind, space, the directions
Time, soul and the mind; of these the earth has
The qualities of sound, touch, colour, taste
And smell; the remaining four have qualities
One less than the order mentioned above.
Matter is possessed of these qualities:
Sound, touch, sight, smell and taste: immensity
And smallness, hardness and softness, greatness,
Feebleness and shape of form; directions
Many as the right side and the left side.
Matter and quality are intended
For action. The higher universal
Tells us of true nature; movement and stillness
Are common, so too death and life; that is
The lower universal; the atom
Is special. Union is the nature
Of the quality and its possession."
Thus he. "O *Bhutavadi*, speak!" she said.

"When *aathi* flowers, sugar and the rest
Are mixed, wine is made. Life too appears
By the mixing of elements, vanishes
When they separate as sounds from a drum.
Conscious elements produce life within
And unconscious ones produce the body
Each appearing through their elements.
This is the truth. Words different from this
And other facts are from Materialists.
Sense perception is valid. Inference
Is false. This birth and its effects conclude
Now. Talk of other births is falsity."
Having heard of all paths, the maid now thought.
"Though they are not right, I shall not dispute."
As she knew of her births, she laughed at him
Who asked: "Is there one who knows his past births?
What you say is not beyond doubt as it may be
Due to God-induced swoon or dream
That confounds the minds of persons in spell.
"How do you recognise your parents
In this world if not through inference?
Do not say that without sense perception
Truth is not found: but for casting a doubt
You cannot explain this." In her disguise
She spoke and thus learnt of the five-fold systems.

Line 5 ff. Describes the Pramana Váda of the Vaidika system.

Veda Vyasa : Author of the Mahabharata, the eighteen Puranas and the Brahma Sutras.

Kritakoti : Bodayana, author of Kritakoti, a work of Mimamsa; also known by the name of his work.

	Jaimini	: Name of a celebrated sage and philosopher, founder of the Mimamsa school of philosophy.

Mimamsa is one of the six chief Darsanas or systems of Indian philosophy. Jaimini is the founder of Poorvamimamsa (also known as Karma Mimamsa) and Badarayana is supposed to have founded the Uttara Mimamsa (also known as Brahma Mimamsa).

Line 8. Veda Vyasa is said to have formulated all the ten Pramanas (logical instruments); Kritakoti only eight and Jaimini only six.

Lines 9-13. Describes the ten Pramanas that posit as many approaches to understanding the nature of things.

Line 27. common : samanya anumana

Lines 53-54. In the Ramayana, Rama the Prince of Ayodhya kills Ravana, the king of Lanka.

Lines 45-46. It is usual for us to leave out 'on the banks of' when speaking of the village on the Ganges.

Lines 47-48. When the elephant-rider asks for a 'thotti' or weapon, it is obvious that he means the 'ankusa', the special type of goad used for controlling elephants.

Line 58. Fallacious knowledge : known as Bramana abhasas.

Lines 61-62. This is known as 'nirvikarpa' sight.

Lines 71-72. In reality there can never be a rabbit with horns.

Line 76. As there is no other way, one has to go by what others say hoping others do not tell a lie.

Lines 89-91. This is known as Ashtamoortham in Saiva Siddhanta.

Line 94. There is nothing beyond Siva; He contains all and is peerless.

Lines 96-97. This is known as Brahma vada

egg of God : lit. Hiranyagarbha, a golden fetus. Name of Brahma.

Lines 98-99. Vaishnavites consider it best to recite the stories of Vishnu in groups.

Lines 100-105. Veda Vada

Line 110 ff. Ajivaka doctrine

Lines 148-149. As we see only a single mass of dark top.

Line 165. Markali Kosa was the third thirthankara of the Ajivaka sect.

Line 167. The Nigranthas are also known as Digambaras in Jain religion.

Line 171. Arhat who is worshipped by the forty two Pavanendras, thirty two Viyantharendras, twenty two Karoendras, the Moon, the Sun, the Narendra and the Mrigendra.

Line 176. those ten : these ten systems of the Nirgranthas.

Lines 185-186. As the green gram is cooked very soft to make the sweet 'kummayam' and it becomes a paste, losing its earlier form.

Line 192. Kalpa : the largest unit of time

Line 199. these : good and bad deeds

Line 207.	Maan	: The 'Mahas' element.
Lines 265-266.	When the three are mixed, the quality of inebriation appears.	
Line 273.	Materialists	: Lokayatas
Line 289.	Though ten systems (Vedic logicians, Saiva, Brahmavadin, Vaishnava, Vedic ritualists, Ajivakas, Nirgranthas, Sankhyas, Vaiseshikas Bhutavadins) are spoken of in the canto, Sathanar refers to them as five because of the general usage which clubs together the first five (as deriving from Vedas), speak of Ajivakas and Nirgranthas as one and the last three separately.	

28. Entering the City of Kanchi

(After listening to the expositions of the different philosophers, *Manimekalai* enters the city of *Vanji* and converses with her grandfather, *Masattuvan. Masattuvan* speaks about his own life based on *dharma* and the future birth of *Kovalan* and *Kannaki*. He then directs her to go to *Kanchi*. She goes there. The King requests her to bring succour to his suffering subjects. Accordingly she feeds the hungering millions with the help of the *Amuda Surabhi*. She then worships Sage *Aravana* and requests him to initiate her into *Buddhist dharma).*

Wishing to see *Aravana* and her mothers,
She crossed the outer cantonment
That was crowded as if the King's soldiers
And enemy kings were battling for the fort.
Vanji's moat was like a rainbow garment
With scented water used by the housewives
For washing tresses, flowing through tunnels,
Water with powders used by youthful men
And women bathing in artificial pools,
Sweet-smelling waters flung through syringes
And horns, to celebrate the King's birthday;
Pure water from the hands of householder-devotees
Washing the feet of sages;
Water that flows from pots in wayside rooms
Filled and scented by the charitable.
Water from well-to-do homes where they grind
Spices, taking care to mix'em properly.
As only such water flowed all over,
Gharials, crocodiles and fishes
Lost the smell of raw flesh on their body.
Lotus and other lily varieties
Spread on the surface with the bees buzzing.
Close to the high fort with machines atop
That could rain down arrows on enemies,
Was the green forest: she reached the fort gate
That was like a divided silver hill

Artfully made, white-washed bright like moonlight,
And had flags waving, and entered the town.
Here the broad street that housed the soldiers
Who guarded the other city limits;
The street where lived fish-vendors, the sellers
Of white-salt, saleswomen of wine, pedlars
Of cakes and rice pudding, sheep's meat hawkers,
Sellers of betel leaves and sweet spices;
Streets filled with potters, coppersmiths, bronzesmiths,
Goldsmiths and metal workers, carpenters
Of wood, masons with building expertise,
Painters who create divine formations
That assure us of grace, shoe-makers and tailors,
Garland-makers, astronomers, also
Musicians recreating through human
Voice and lute, the three reaches in terms of
Enjoyable tunes and their melodies;
The streets with cutters of conch-shell bangles
And proficient stringers of gleaming pearls;
The street of dancing women containing
Adepts in subjective and public dance.
The bazaar street with hillocks of grains
Of eight varieties, the street of minstrels,
Rhapsodists and specialists in rhythm;
The street of courtesans who give pleasure;
The street of weavers who work capably
With thin threads that cannot be seen by the eyes;
The streets with grand homes of touchstone experts;
The street with sellers of gem varieties;
The street of brahmins intent on their work;
The street of officials and ministers;
The street where top administrators live;
Public halls, assemblies, street junctions, squares;
The street with trainers of new elephants
And horses decorated with gold beads:
Crossing them, she saw artificial hills
With high water-falls; attractive woodlands;
Places with flowing water that would please
Even gods should they come down to the earth;

Roads and rooms, gold-gleaming assembly halls;
Painted halls for performing askesis;
She saw these with joy and in her new garb
Entered the hermitage used for resting
By people who fly in the air, and known as
Indra's Temple, and where the ascetics
Praise the faultless *Buddha*. There the maiden
Bowed at the feet of *Kovalan's* father,
An ascetic now, and spoke to him of her
Vessel of charity; how the King of
Savaka gained faultless wealth through giving;
How she brought him to the island to show
Him the Seat which told him of his past births;
Even as he recognised, a goddess
Appeared and comforted him: and how
She heard of *Pukar's* loss and the escape
Of her mothers and *Aravana* thence;
How the King of *Savaka* returned home;
And how she reached this town from that island;
How she had in her assumed garb
Listened to the many philosophers;
How none of the teachings of those systems
Were accepted by her listening soul;
How she had come in search of the great sage
To listen to the *dharma* of the *Buddha*.
When she had done, he spoke: "O pure maiden!
It is my good fortune that I met you.
Young girl! As the prosperous city burned
Due to the evil deeds of thy parents
And I heard of their sad death, and as I
Deserved the loving *dharma* of the *Buddha*,
I found family life an illusion,
And that wealth and this physical body
Are not more lasting than the millet grain,
Which made me take to *dharmic* askesis.
Do hear why I came to this city
Named after the lovely rattan creeper.
There was once a King of the *Kuttuvas*
Who stamped his bow-sign on the *Himavant*.
He entered this garden with his women

Who had coral lips and very thin waists.
Some sages who fly the path of dark clouds
In the skies, and were then returning from
The *Samanoli* Hill of Sri Lanka
Decided to rest here. They got down
In this garden, as the time was ripe for
The King's good fortune. As the visitors
Rested on a stone, the King who had done
Good deeds in past births, praised the ascetics,
Washed their lotus-like feet, and then offered
Wholesome food to them, that had the six tastes
And four varieties. With his courtiers
He prayed to them, doing many honours.
To him the sages spoke of sorrow
That attends birth, and the joy that follows
The state of non-birth, the holy statements
Of *Buddha* that are nectar to the soul.
There was to your father a forebear
Nine-times removed, named *Kovalan* who was
A close friend of the King mentioned above.
He too listened to the words of *dharma*
And gave away all his ancestral wealth
And the many crores he had earned as well
To mendicants, all within a week's time.
Taking to asceticism, he built
A sky-reaching temple in gleaming white
That helped mortals overcome their sorrow.
Planning to pray there, I was on my way
When the holy sages of this city
Told me: '*Pukar* will be eaten by the sea.'
These good words led to my staying here.
Maid who walks the path of *dharma!* Listen!
Your father whose evil past led him
Will be born among gods, thanks to good deeds.
After births to work out the evil past
He will listen to *dharma* from *Buddha*
Seated under the *Bodhi* tree within
Kapilavastu, and himself take to
Asceticism with his wife to gain
Release.' I heard this forecast from wise men

And realised its import. O maiden!
I shall also listen to *Buddha* then.
Have you not heard of your future from
Duvathigan who dwells in the pillar?
I heard of this from Sage *Aravana*.
As *Kanchi* is the stage for thy good deeds
O maid! he too has gone to that city.
On the same day the sage journeyed forth
Your mothers too accompanied him.
Hear some more, O bejewelled lady!
Kanchi with the golden fort has lost its
Glory. People are dying. Rains have failed.
As there is none to feed the ascetics
They have come to this city. Medicine
Are you for life! It is your duty
To save that land like water-laden clouds."
When he was done, the maid saluted him
Took the divine pot in her lovely hands,
Rose above from the west of *Vanji* town
With flag-waving fort, and travelled northwards.
She found the city once as glorious
As if it were *Indra's* capital on earth,
Now poverty-stricken and sans its beauty.
With her heart full of compassion, the maid
Went around the fort right-wards, and got down
Into the central part of the city.
She prayed at the temple built by the King's
Brother to *Buddha*, who had sat under
The *Bodhi* tree which had golden branches
And fresh green leaves rivalling emerald.
She went to a garden to the south-west
And rested. To the King of the country
An official went, saluted and said:
'*Kovalan's* daughter who renounced the world
Is famous throughout the *Jambu* island.
She has come to the garden of *dharma*
Like life-giving rain, holding in her hand
The nectar-vessel.' When he heard these words
The King remembered thankfully: "What the
Pillar-statue forecast is happening."

With his courtiers he went willingly
To the place where the good maid was staying.
"Due to faulty reign or fault in tapas,
Or transgression in female chastity,
O righteous maid! The whole of my good land
Is blasted now by a terrible drought.
To me in agony came a Goddess.
"Sorrow not! Thanks to your past good deeds
A maid will appear. From her vessel
Will come forth medicine to save this land.
By her grace and orders of *Indra*
Heavy, welcome rains will pour down on earth.
Since the coming of that maid to this town
There will be many deeds of righteousness.
The clouds may go dry, but never the earth.
Build a lake and garden in this place
As if the full *Gomukhi* lake structured
Nobly by the ancients had come here
Along with *Manipallavam*.' After
The Goddess vanished, I constructed this."
He showed her around. Delighted to see
That garden which looked like an island,
The good lady spoke of 'the holy Seat
That showed me my past,' and caused to be built
A lotus Seat for the *Buddha;* also
A temple for *Dipatilakai* and
Goddess *Manimekala* where people
Could worship; she then arranged through the King
Festivals and special celebrations.
Herself worthy of being saluted,
The maid bowed and prayed to the goddesses.
She placed on the lotus Seat the nectar pot
That was medicine to the hunger-sickness
And pronounced: 'Welcome, all living beings!'
Hearing the words of the lovely girl
Folk speaking eighteen languages came there.
Among them the blind, the deaf and the lame;
Guardianless people, the dumb, the sick;
Ascetics and people ill with hunger;
People who had grown poor through idleness;

Ten thousand varieties of animals;
Thus all classes of living things gathered.
Like life-giving physic for those who ate,
Like the result of giving alms to ascetics,
Like the yield when the seed is sown with thought
To water, earth, season and work in fields,
Like rains that fall to help the earth's increase,
Was the maid compared and thanked by people
Whose hunger-sickness had been cured by her.
At this time came the sage *Aravana*
Who had beyonded evil, along with
Her mothers, to the house of charity
Where the maid took the lead to save the city.
She went towards them and bowed at their feet.
'May good things be!' She stated, washed their feet,
Gave them seats, took to them food of six tastes
And four varieties, and made them eat the same.
Then she offered betel leaves and camphor.
'May my soul's desire for *dharma* come to fruition!'
Manimekalai said, free from illusion.

Line 1. mothers : Madhavi and Sutamati

Line 5 ff. The effective drainage system of those days may be imagined by this description.

Line 17. mix'em properly : mix the spices in the right proportion.

Lines 38-39. Painters who are inspired to draw super-human figures.

Line 42. three reaches : three types of pitch, from the lowest to the highest.

Line 47.	subjective and public dance	: dances meant for exclusive showing (classical) to a select aristocratic audience, and those exhibited to the general public (folk).
Line 54.	experts who knew all about gold.	
Line 73.	Kovalan's father	: Masattuvan
Lines 75-76.	King of Savaka	: Punyarajan who had been Aaputhran in an earlier birth.
Line 79.	recognised	: recognised his bones that lay on the Manipallavam beach.
	goddess	: Dipatilakai
Line 89.	great sage	: Aravana
Line 91.	he	: Masattuvan
Line 94.	evil deeds	: Kovalan's causing the death of Sangaman in an earlier birth.
Lines 103-104.	The reference here is to the King, Imayavaramban Netuncheralatan.	
Line 109.	Samanoli Hill in Sri Lanka is now called Adam's Peak.	
Line 116.	six tastes	: bitter, pungent, sour, salty, astringent and sweet.
Line 117.	four varieties	: gulping, munching, licking, drinking.
Line 134.	this city	: Vanji
Line 150.	of this	: of the forecast
Line 177.	The King referred to here was a Chola, Killi, the younger brother of Killi Valavan.	

29. Manimekalai Receives the Dharma

(Sage *Aravana* recounts to *Manimekalai* the sequence of events culminating in the destruction of *Pukar*. *Peelivalai* entrusted to *Kambala Chetti* her son born of the *Chola* King and requested him to hand over the boy to the King. The *Chetti's* boat capsized in the sea and the boy was lost. The *Chetti* informed the King of the tragedy. The King was deeply disturbed and forgot to celebrate the *Indra* festival. *Indra's* curse destroyed the *Chola* capital. The Sage also tells her how she had been named after *Kovalan's* family deity, Goddess *Manimekala*. *Manimekalai* requested him to illumine her about *Buddhist* tenets. Accordingly he teaches her the Buddhist *dharma)*.

Sage *Aravana* whose tongue always spoke
Dharma, blessed the girl who saluted him:
"*Peelivalai*, the *Naga* princess, gave
Her son born of victorious *Killi*
To the *Kambala* merchant who had come
To the island. He bowed and took the boy
Into his ship. At midnight the ship was wrecked
Off the coast. The merchant who lost the ship
Could not find the boy. To the king he came
And gave the dire news. The King was saddened
And spent all his time searching for him
Forgetting to arrange the festival.
A great ancestor of your father
Was once caught in the shark-infested sea
Where his ship sank: as a golden needle
Stitching a green carpet, for seven days
He struggled bravely, against all evil,
Because of his pure character and his
Adherence to the five-fold discipline. *Indra's*
White carpet shuddered, and he came to know.
To the Goddess he said: 'A good merchant
Who will become a realised Teacher
Is caught in the sea. Save him!' The Goddess
Did so. Wise sages told the good merchant

After he had been taken from the sea:
'She helps mankind cross life's difficulties,
For *dharma* to rule, and the *dharma* wheel
Move through all births.' Rendered grateful
By these memories, Your father named you
After her. On the same day
She came in a dream and forecast as true
Your renunciation. Like the curse
Of gentle Goddess *Manimekala*
Was the destructive word of Lord *Indra*
Who had been denied the annual
Festive offerings! The city went under
The sea. Your mother as also me
Came to this town only for your sake."
The maid bowed at Sage *Aravana's* feet.
"*Dipatilakai* who praised the Seat
Of *Buddha* also spoke in this manner.
Therefore, though in that lovely town I heard
In disguise, the inner truth of systems
That speak in varied ways in their scriptures,
I did not welcome to my inner mind
The five that seemed as false as my dress.
O holy Sage! Grant me the true teaching!"
"I will, O maiden. Listen carefully.
The first *Buddha* spoke of two instruments
Of logic: perception and inference.
Perception is feeling by senses but
Excludes name, species quality and action,
As these conjoin with inference too.
'Causal', 'consequential', and 'common'
Are the three ways of inference. These may
Mislead us except the second as when:
'Fire has smoke!' All the other instruments
Follow but the method of inference.
Its five divisions are: proposition,
Reason, example, application and
Conclusion. The first: 'This mountain has fire.'
Reason: 'Because it smokes.' The example:
'Like a well-formed stove.' Its application:
The mountain too smokes.' Thus the conclusion:

'Whatever emits smoke, that contains fire.'
To say, 'That which has no fire does not smoke,
Like water' would be contradictory
To the proposition. Then would it be
An example of contrareity.
If pure effect is of the nature of
The example, we say; 'Sound is fleeting.'
The proposition is: 'Because it is made.'
This is the attribute of the subject.
Then to say, 'that which is made is fleeting
Like a pot' is a similarity
Of the subject. The contrary statement
For the above: 'That which is not fleeting
Is not made, like the space.' For the mode of
Connective inference, a good subject
Could be: 'There is no pot in this empty space.'
To add: 'because it is not visible'
Gives us the attribute of the subject.
To say: 'we have not seen a rabbit's horns
As it has none' is that kind of subject.
The contrary statement for that: 'What is,
Is seen as a gooseberry on one's palm.'
It is thus that Reason proves Existence.
To ask: 'How did the smoke prove the subject?'
By the inference that 'where there is smoke
There is fire,' as also the negative
Concomitance: 'Where there is no fire, there
No smoke is', the smoke proved the fact of fire.
The smoke's rising in upward direction
And its spreading in wavy directions
Being fire's characteristics, the place
Where it is darkling upwards and spreading
Around, should also be said to have fire.
This identical inference then would prove:
'He who saw an ass and a dancing girl
Together in one place, if he happens
To see the ass there later, must infer
Also the presence of the dancing girl
In the same place.' This would of course be wrong.
'There is no smoke without fire.' This be

Negative concomitance. However,
To say: 'There is no fox's tail on the
Mane of a donkey that has no dog's tail'
And then infer elsewhere the existence
Of the dog's tail through the tail of the fox
Is not correct either. Application
And conclusion that are with the subject
Also go along with the Example:
Proposition, Reason and Example
Are of two types: valid and invalid.
The valid contains what is apparent,
Its positive attributes and all that
Differentiates it from the other
As its natural principle. Hold on
To it as the correct proposition.
An instance: 'Sound is non-eternal or
Eternal': What is apparent is sound.
Its positive attribute is, being
Eternal': or non-eternal. Reason
Is of three types: the characteristics
Of the subject, its similarity
And the absence of contrary statement.
For the similarity to be proved,
The attributes should be applicable
Generally. To prove that sound is fleeting
Bring in: 'It is non-eternal like a pot.'
To prove the contrary statement could be:
'That which is non-eternal is not made
Like the space.' Being made as also
Appearing in the act of making
Are present in the subject and also
In its similar subject, nor is it
For the contrary statement, hence this is
A valid reason. Faultless example
Is of two types: similar attributes
And dissimilar. The former goes thus:
'That which is made is non-eternal like
A pot.' A dissimilar example:
'Where the conclusion is not, reason is absent.'
These are valid means for proper proof.

Proposition, Reason, and Example
Which are invalid: fallacious proposition,
Fallacious Reason and the fallacious
Example. Of these fallacious proposition
Is of nine types: that which is contrary
To perception, inference, a statement
Made at the beginning, established fact,
And established authority as also
What the other cannot perceive, nor know
The proposition itself, nor agree
With the proposition and conclusion
Nor reiteration to what is known.
Of these, the first is speaking contrary to
Perception: 'Sound is not seen by the ear.'
What is contrary to inference comes
When that is made by contrariety:
'The non-eternal pot is eternal.'
Fallacious statement comes through such speech:
'My mother is barren.' What goes against
Established fact is speaking in this wise:
'The shining moon above is not the moon.'
Against established authority such statements:
When a *Vaiseshika*, who holds all things
Non-eternal says, 'This is eternal.'
What the other cannot perceive is not
A valid proposition. If a *Buddhist*
Were to tell a *Sankhya* philosopher
'Sound is non-eternal,' that then becomes
Fallacious from the side of the *Sankhya*
As the *Sankhya* is an eternalist.
When the other person does not even understand
The proposition itself, it would be
Fallacious, as when a *Sankhya* speaks to
A *Buddhist* of opposite views: 'The soul
Has the faculty of understanding,'
Since the latter does not believe in a soul.
When the other does not agree with the
Proposition and conclusion, that is
Fallacious, as when a *Vaiseshika*
Speaks to a *Buddhist*: 'The soul is the cause

For pleasure and the rest,' as the latter
Does not accept the reality of pleasure
And the soul. The last of these is
Repeating to the other what he knows,
As telling a *Buddhist*: 'Sound is fleeting.'
Since that also happens to be his thought
There is no need for a repetition.
Fallacious reasoning is of three types:
The Unaccepted, the Doubtful and the
Contradictory. The Unaccepted
Has four divisions: what both do not accept,
Where the predication is not accepted,
Where the reason is dubious, and where
The character is held non-existent.
'Non-eternal sound is seen' thus becomes
Unacceptable to both. If it is
Said: 'The sound has evolved and so it is fleeting,'
The predication ceases to be as
The *Sankhya* cannot accept the statement
That goes against the evolution from
Consciousness. Where the reason is held out
As questionable: 'Is it smoke or snow?'
But accept: 'It is smoke, hence there is fire!'
In projecting a thing whose character
Is not recognised by the other:
'The space is existent because of sound.'
This becomes fallacious when the other
Does not believe in space itself. The Doubtful
Has six types: That which is common to both,
That which is not in either, the middle term
Which refers to some similarities,
Or which refers to some of both, and where
It is not the reason. When the reason
Is uncertain in both: 'Sound is cognised
Hence non-eternal.' Cognition pertains
To eternal and non-eternal things.
'Is it non-eternal like a pot or
Eternal as the space?' would then prove the
Fallacy. When the reason is absent
In both the subject and its opposite:

'Sound is eternal as it is heard.' Then
Audibility belongs only to
The proposition, and not to subject
Or its opposite; hence this creates an
Uncertainty, and belongs to the side
Of the Doubtful. When the middle term
Pertains to some of the similar things
And agrees with all things dissimilar,
Suppose it is said: 'Sound is not produced
By endeavour, as it is non-eternal.'
The reason of non-eternality
Comes from the proposition which abides
In lightning and space. But sound abides in
Lightning which is fleeting and in the space
Which is eternal. Non-eternal things
Like the pot are comparable and so
The doubt arises: will it appear
In the non-eternality of pots?
Again, will it not appear in the
Non-eternality of the lightning?'
When the middle term pertains to
Some dissimilarities and all of
Similarities: 'Sound is produced by
Endeavour as it is non-eternal.'
The reason is found in lightning but not
In space and is found in all things like pots.
The doubt arises then: 'Will it not be
Non-eternal like the lightning? Again,
'Will it appear as non-eternal
As in the case of pots?' The middle term
When it is found appropriate in one
Attribute of both the similar and
Dissimilar sides: 'Sound is eternal
As it is formless.' The formlessness is
Found in space and minutest atoms
That are eternal. Again the minute
Atoms do have form. The reason is found
In happiness, but not in things like a pot.
Giving such a reason that is found
In only part of the proposition

And its contrariety is fallacious.
Thus: 'Is formlessness eternal like space?
'Is formlessness fleeting like happiness?'
The Doubtful Reason occurs also when
The given term cannot be the reason.
'Sound is not eternal as it is the
Product of endeavour.' For that act
Things like the pot stand witness. However,
To say: 'Sound is eternal as it is
Heard, like the principle of sound' can but
Create doubt in premise and conclusion.
Contradiction if explained properly
Has four types: when the given reason
Changes the premise itself; or changes
The attribute of the premise; or changes
The determining clause; or seeks to change
The nature of the determining clause.
The given reason changes the premise
As when it is said: 'Sound is eternal,
As it is the product of endeavour.'
Since what is produced is non-eternal,
The reason goes against the concept of
Eternality, and goes on to prove
Non-eternality, hence fallacious.
The given reason when it changes the
Attribute of the premise goes this way:
'The sense organs like eyes, if thought about,
Are separate, as they are attached to
Another, like the mattress and the cot.'
The reason, 'as they are attached' takes the
Sense organs like eyes to be not joined
As the mattress and the cot are separate,
And like a man who owns separate things
Like the mattress and the cot, makes the soul
Which has no form and is the master of
Sense organs like the eyes, have its own form.
The fallacy arose thus by making
The formless soul also have limbs that are
Not part of it. This is fallacious,
When the determining clause of what is

Proposed is changed by the reason which was
Meant to prove it: 'Truth is not matter,
Nor action, nor quality. As matter,
Action and quality are separate,
Like the premise and its attribute.'
The reason that showed up as separate
Matter, quality and action that were
Thought of together, does not possess the
General truth common to all the three,
The example does not have anything
Except the premise and the attribute.
As there is no reason to prove what is
Stated in the determining clause
This is fallacy of contradiction.
When the reason given goes on to prove
What is contrary tc the form of the
Determining clause itself, the reason
Stated earlier becomes now the truth.
The truth of the stated matter, quality
And action make it contrary. And hence
This too is fallacious. The examples
That resemble truth but are fallacious
Are of two kinds as stated earlier.
Of these, the fallacy of example
By similarity is of five kinds.
Where, the stated instrument of reason
Is incomplete; where the predicate
Of the proposition is incomplete;
Where both the reason and the predicate
Are incomplete; where connective thought
Is not given; and where the connection
Is inferred from the predicate's nature.
The example by dissimilarity
In five-fold: where the predicate remains;
Where the middle term is proved contrary;
Where both are proved contrary; absence of
A clear reason; and speaking in terms
That upset the argument. To take up
The problem where the given reason is
Incomplete: 'Sound is eternal, as it is formless:

That which is formless is eternal and
Is seen in the atom.' The example
Of atom which is eternal and with
Form, is appropriate for the predicate
But is not formless as the reason states.
Where in the example given to us
The predicate of the proposition
Is incomplete: 'Sound is eternal as
It is formless. Whatever is formless
Is eternal like intellect.' Here
Intellect which is shown for example
Is formless and non-eternal. Therefore
It satisfies the formlessness spoken
By the reason, but not the predicate
Which speaks of eternality. Now to
The example where both the predicate
And the reason are incomplete: Again
This is of two varieties: of what is
Existent and what is non-existent.
The former shows the incompleteness
Of the predicate and the reason in
What is existent: 'Sound is eternal
As it is formless. That which is formless
Is eternal like the pot'. The object
Of example being the pot which is
Created, the predicate which speaks of
Eternality and the middle term
Which is formlessness are both incomplete.
The incompleteness of the predicate
And the reason in what is non-existent:
'Sound is non-eternal because it is
Formless. That which has a form of its own
Is non-eternal like the space.
In this example, the non-eternal
Nature of the predicate, and the form
Found as the quality in the reason,
Make fallacious the conclusion to say:
'Space is non-existent.' For the person
Who concludes 'space is existent,' this is
Fallacious as the space is eternal

As also formless. In the fallacy
Where the connective thought is not given,
Only the predicate and the reason
Are spoken of: 'Sound is non-eternal
As it is made. But without saying that
'That thing which is made is non-eternal'
If the example is given: 'The pot
Shows production and non-eternality,'
The connective thought will not be present.
Where the connection is inferred from
The nature of the predicate, to say:
'Sound is non-eternal as it is made'
And state: 'What is made is non-eternal.'
Without thinking of the predicate through
The reason, it is the other way round.
'Whatever is non-eternal, is produced.'
If so, the predicate is proved without
The reason given. This is fallacious.
Examples by dissimilarity
When taken up: where the middle term proves
The contrariety and the predicate
Remains: 'Sound is eternal because
It is formless.' If as an example
It is said: 'That which is non-eternal
Is not formless, like an atom.'
As atom which is used as an example
Is eternal and has a form, there is
Contrariety to the formlessness
In the reason, and the eternality
In the predicate remains. Nextly, where
The contrariety to the predicate is made
And reason remains: 'Sound is eternal
As it is formless. Suppose it is said,
'That which is non-eternal, that has no
Form either, like fate.' The example of fate
Is formless but is non-eternal
Too. Hence, the eternality in the
Predicate is absent in the example
While the formless in the reason
Remains. Where both predicate and reason

Are proved contrary by the example
We have fallacy again. This is of
Two kinds: where both predicate and reason
Are proved contrary by the existent;
And that where both predicate and reason
Are proved contrary by the non-existent.
Of the former that proves contrariety
To the predicate and reason. 'Sound is
Eternal as it is formless.' To this
Reason if it is argued: 'That thing
Which is non-eternal is also
Formless like the space,' for those who assert
By contrariety that space is matter,
Space being eternal and formless,
The eternality in the predicate
And formlessness in reason are fallacious.
Where predicate and the reason are proved
Contrary by what is non-existent:
'Sound is non-eternal as it has form.'
To this reasoning when it is argued:
'That which is non-eternal, has no form,
Like space' in terms of contrariety,
For him who says that space is not matter
Since space is for him non-existent,
The predicate's non-eternality
And the form in reason are fallacious.
Negation of the argument is found in
Not stating the absence of reason.
'Sound is eternal as it is not made.'
By not speaking in terms of negation
To this: 'That thing which is non-eternal
That is a thing not made,' and by saying
'Because we saw in the pot what is made
And what is non-eternal,' negation
Is not proved and this becomes fallacious.
Perverse negation is stating in terms
That upsets the argument: 'Sound is
Eternal as it has form.' After this,
Instead of saying that, 'where there is no
Eternality there is no form too,'

If one were to say, 'where there is no form,
There is no eternality either,'
The negation itself gets perverted.
By not succumbing to the fallacious
Reasonings and fallacious inferences
Explained by me and by examining
Yourself through perception and inference,
Learn clearly about truth and non-truth."

Line 3 ff. For an account of the union of Peelivalai and the Chola King, see canto 24, 'Towards Aaputhran's Kingdom.'

Line 12. The festival is honour of Indra.

Lines 15-16. The merchant is compared to a golden needle, while the sea is seen as a green carpet.

Lines 19-20. See Canto 14, lines 29-30.

five-fold discipline : Non-killing, abstaining from inebriating drink, avoiding falsehood, avoiding lust and thievery.

Line 26. She : Goddess Manimekala

Line 29. your father : Kovalan

Line 43. She had disguised herself as a monk. It turned out that as far as she was concerned the different philosophies turned out to be as false as her own disguise.

Line 46. the five : see canto 27, line 289.

Line 105. i.e., the negative of the assertion, known as 'vetirekam.'

Line 113.	Paksha, Hetu and Drishtanta.
Lines 149-156.	Pratyaksha viruddham, Anumana viruddham, Suvachana viruddham, Loke viruddham, Agama viruddham, Aprasiddha viseshanam, Aprasiddha viseshiyam Aprasiddha upayam and Aprasiddha sammandham.
Line 192.	Asiddham, Anikantikam and Viruddham Upayasiddham, Anyatha-siddham, Siddha-siddham and Asraya-siddham.
Line 213.	Sadharana, Asadharana, Sapakkaika, Desavirudhi Vipakkavyapi, Vipakkaika Desavirudhi Sappakkavyapi, Upaiyika Desavirudhi and Vuruddha Viyapisari.
Line 277.	Dharmasvarupa viparita sadhanam, Dharma visheda viparita sadhanam, Dharmisvarupa viparita sadhanam and Dharmi visheda viparita sadhanam.
Line 327.	Sadhanmya and Vaidhanmya
Line 329.	Sadhana dharma vikalam, Sadhya dharma vikalam, Upaya dharma vikalam, Ananvayam and Viparita Ananvayam.
Line 338.	Sadhya avya viruddhi, Sadhana avya viruddhi, Upaya avya viruddhi, Avya vyatireka and Viparita vyatireka.

30. The Maiden's Askesis to Overcome Birth

(Sage *Aravana* teaches *Manimekalai* the way to realise the Truth of Being according to *Buddhist* philosophy. Her mind illumined, she dedicates herself to the ideal life that leads to salvation).

Performing charity, disciplined by
Virtue, she who knew of all her past births
Thrice saluted the three jewels, *Buddha*,
Dharma and *Sangha*, therein taking her
Refuge, after surrendering all.
He began telling her about the Lord
Who was *dharma* incarnate. "In that age
When knowledge had weakened, on the request
Of gods, he descended from *Tushita*
Heaven, sat beneath the tree of *Bodhi*,
Defeated *Mara*, became a hero.
The beautiful one spoke joy-giving words
That destroy completely the three defects.
Also, countless *Buddhas* before his time
Spoke words of wisdom out of compassion.
These words of the *Buddhas* speak of the twelve
Inter-linked conditions that appear
And reappear one from the other
As a circle. When the cause is removed
This chain is undone. Where the cause is not,
The effect vanishes; where the cause is,
The effects come to being. According
To the effects, the causes are found out
And the conditions enumerated.
These are of four categories and have
Within them three varieties of junctions.
There are three kinds of birth in existence
And so too the time for birth is three-fold.
For realisation, we need to learn
The misery of birth which is fleeting
And grows out of faults, fate and their result.
The basal support of the four-fold truth,
Home of the five forms of mundane consciousness,

Reaching out with its six-fold conventions,
Gaining the four-fold questions and answers,
Without creation or dissolution,
A continuous series with no break,
Neither making others nor being made,
With no sense of ego or possession,
With no sense of the past or the future,
Neither ending itself nor with an end,
Resulting from action and its result,
Birth and Release, are the twelve *Nidhanas*.
They who know the truth of these: Ignorance,
Action, Consciousness, Name-form, Sense organs,
Feelings, Experience, Thirst, Attachment,
Existence, Birth, and the result of deeds done,
Know the path of Release: they who know not
Will have to go to Hell and suffer there.
'What is ignorance?' The answer is: It is
Not understanding the above-mentioned,
Being deluded by what others say
And agreeing that the rabbit has horns.
Countless the living beings existing
In the three worlds: they are of six classes.
Mortals, gods, *Brahmas*, denizens of Hell,
Animal species and spirits are these.
Following one's good or bad deeds in the past
One enters the womb already prescribed.
Even as an embryo, the beings
Experience the result of deeds, thereby
Gathering great happiness or sadness.
'What are bad deeds?' To this your question,
O bejewelled good girl, listen to this.
From the physical body appear
Murder, theft and desire for wrong passion;
From speech appear untruth, backbiting,
Words of harshness and purposeless talking;
From the mind appears covetousness,
Anger and illusory understanding.
Men of right thinking who understand these
Ten deeds avoid them: if they happen to
Do them, they become animals, spirits,

And Hell's denizens and suffer sorrow.
'What are good deeds?' Answer to this question:
Avoiding the ten deeds described above,
Disciplined by virtue, and doing deeds
Of charity leads to birth in the three
Higher species, gods, mortals and *Brahmas*
That gives joy which comes of doing good deeds.
Consciousness is the inert, inactive
State of mind that is found during one's sleep.
Name-form is the feeling mentioned above
When it is found abiding in the body.
The six sense organs bridge consciousness to
The objects perceived and also desired.
Sensuous feeling is that when the mind
And the senses contact external things.
Experience is the sense of enjoyment.
Thirst comes when there is no satisfaction.
Attachment is the desire to want more.
As the result of one's deeds, existence
Arrives, dealing appropriate reaping.
Birth comes to us according to past deeds
In any of the several birth forms
Following the law of cause and effect.
Disease is contrariness to nature
Which affects the body and gives it pain.
Old age is the weakening of body's
Resistance to the blows of one's past deeds.
Death occurs when this body with a name
And form vanishes like the setting sun.
From ignorance appears all action;
Action leads to the birth of consciousness;
Consciousness proceeds to take a Name-form;
From this name-form appear sense organs;
Sense organs lead to sensuous feelings;
These feelings result in experience;
From this experience arises thirst;
Again, from this thirst issues attachment.
This attachment gives rise to existence.
From what is existence, there appears
The taking of births in different forms.

From birth proceed old age, sickness and death,
Distress, lamentation and helplessness,
All this leading to one's ceaseless sorrow.
Such is the cycle of experience.
But when ignorance goes, action ceases;
When action is not, consciousness ceases;
When consciousness goes, name-form ceases too.
When name-form ceases, sense organs withdraw.
When sense organs cease, there is no contact.
Where contact goes, experience is not.
Where experience ceases, thirst is not.
When there is no thirst, attachment ceases
When there is no attachment, existence
Is not. Absence of existence leads to
Non-birth. With the cessation of birth forms
Rebirth is gone! and with this birth, sickness,
Old age, death, distress, lamentation and
Helplessness as also ceaseless sorrow
Will all be destroyed. This is cessation.
The Prime Division is known to be so
Because it consists of ignorance and action
That cause all the evils that follow.
The Second Division is made up of
Consciousness, name-form, sense organs, contact,
And experience. These are the direct
Outcome of the nature of the former.
The Third Division does constitute thirst,
Attachment and the collection of deeds.
These are given rise to by what precedes
In the process of cause and its effect.
Of the Fourth Division now: birth, sickness,
Old age, death. Such are the sorrowful things
That proceed from one's taking birth on earth.
The Prime Junction is between action
And consciousness. The crystalline Second One
Is between one's experience and thirst:
The collection of deeds and continuous
Births that go on make up the Third Junction.
Speaking of the three kinds of birth, they be
Birth with the consciousness of the supreme

Wisdom which leads to the path of Release;
With a body of active consciousness
As mortal beings, gods and animals.
When we consider the three kinds of time:
Ignorance that denies memory and
Action, comprises of what is known as past:
The present time consists of consciousness,
Name-form, sense organs, external contact,
Experience, thirst, attachment, existence,
And birth which follow one after another:
As future time are enumerated
Birth, sickness, old age, death, unhappiness,
Lamentation, helplessness, and sorrow.
Desire, attachment and ignorance are
Counted as conditions which are faulty.
Existence and fate come from faulty deeds.
Resulting from faulty deeds in past life
There come consciousness, name-form, sense organs,
Feelings, experience, birth, age, sickness
And death. Faulty deeds and results give pain.
The forms that proceed from these are fleeting.
Realisation is the knowledge that
None of these has anything called soul.
To know that nothing but pain constitutes
Consciousness, name-form, sense organs, feelings,
Experience, birth, sickness, old age, death,
Unhappiness, lamentation, helplessness
And sorrow. Pain is caused by ignorance,
Action, desire, attachment and also
The collection of one's past deeds. Desire
Is the root cause of births and pain. Desire's
Removal leads to the way of Release
And to happiness: these are the four Truths.
The five branches are form, experience,
Indication, abstraction and knowledge.
To explain rightly the six conventions:
Totality, linkage, special nature,
Common parlance; conventions with these four
As base appear as made up of Truth,
As that made of what is non-existent,

Of Truth with what is, of the non-Truth with
What is not, of the non-Truth with what is
And of Truth with what is not. Speaking of
Totality we have body, water,
Country. Of the linkage of seed, sprout, stalk,
We call the whole entity paddy.
To point out by special nature is
To speak of a thing as fleeting, as born,
Or as becoming old. Common parlance
Is defining a group of letters
As a word, or a set of days as a month.
Truthful convention is to state what is.
Non-truthful is saying a hare has horns.
Truthful is to say that consciousness has
With it experience.The convention
Of non-Truthful with what is, is saying
'Consciousness appeared as a lightning flash.'
The convention of Truth with what is not
Is to speak as fact what has not happened.
That of non-Truth with what does not exist!
'As a hare has no horns, it exists not.'
The four principles are: the integral,
The divisive the definite and Truth.
The integral principle is to see
As a whole the given cause and effect.
The divisive is not to understand
The unity of cause and its effect.
The definite principle is to say
There is no soul that is supposed to help
In understanding the reasons behind
The original cause and its effects.
The principle of truth is to say that
'Paddy sprouts from paddy.' The uses are
To know that everything is only
Linkage, we should avoid attachment there,
Nor think that there is a doer behind,
And that causes alone lead to effect,
And that it is not that nor what is not;
Such is the four-fold principles given.
There are four questions and answers: to give

Direct answers, to reply in stages,
To counter-question, and to keep silent.
'Will what has appeared vanish also?'
'It will vanish,' such the direct reply.
'Will a dead man be born again or not?'
To this question a reply in stages
Would be: 'Did he gain detachment? Or else,
Did he die with attachment?' they say.
Counter-question is: 'Did the seed come first?
Or the palmyra tree appeared first? Tell me!'
Reply: 'Which palmyra tree to which seed?'
To keep silent: 'Is the sky flower old
Or is it new?' To this questioner
Remaining silent without an answer.
It is no outsider who keeps us in
Bondage or release or causes either.
All that we described as above are caused
By desire, anger and illusion.
To snap attachment by recognising
Impermanence, pain, soullessness and dirt;
May your anger cease by good consciousness
Of friendship, compassion and joyful thought.
Give up illusion by reading scriptures,
By meditation, contemplation and
Realisation. Be freed from mental
Darkness by these four!" Thus with firm good words
He illumed the lamp of knowledge for her.
Having heard *Dharma*, inclined to austerity,
The maid renounced to overcome bondage.

Lines 1-5. Saluting thrice : saluting while repeating 'I take refuge in Buddha': 'I take refuge in Dharma': 'I take refuge in Sangha'. This might also mean saluting with thought, word and deed.

Lines 9-10. Tushita Heaven is where the Bodhisattvas are said to remain before descending to the earth as Buddhas.

Line 13. three defects : lust, anger, ignorance.

Lines 16-17. See canto 24, line 105.

Line 25. The twelve conditions of existence are divided into four categories. Ignorance and action belong to the first category; consciousness, name-form, sense organs, sensuous feeling and experience form the second; thirst, attachment and existence form the third; birth and disease make up the last category.

Line 26. the three junctions : action -- consciousness; sensuous feeling -- thirst; existence -- birth.

Line 27. three kinds of birth : as man, god and animal.

Line 28. time : past, present, future.

Line 32. see canto 2, 11. 64-67.

Line 33. The five forms of mundane consciousness or Pancha Skandhas are form, experience, indication, abstraction and knowledge.

Line 34. six-fold conventions are totality, linkage, special nature, common parlance, the true and the untrue.

Line 35. four-fold forms of excellence: the integral, the divisive, the definite and the Truth.

Line 36. four-fold questions and answers : to give direct answers, to reply in stages, to counter-question and to keep silent.

Line 38. continuous series : known as santana it has four varieties: vayu, deepa, dhara and pipeelika.

Line 47. thirst : trishna, the desire to gain happiness and chase away sorrow.

attachment : getting attached to things that seem to give happiness.

Line 49. Release : Nirvana

Line 52. the above-mentioned : the four-fold truth and the twelve Nidhanas mentioned above which explain the four-fold truth.

Line 53. deluded : forgetting what is seen by one and believing mere hearsay.

Line 56. the three worlds : The twelve worlds above beginning with Maharajitha Heaven, the four worlds below like Naraka Hell and the world of mortals: i.e. Heaven, Hell and Earth.

Lines 61-63. Pleasure and pain come upon the mortal from the time of conception, and are experienced corresponding to the accumulated effects of their good and bad deeds. This is the theory of Karma.

Line 73. Ten deeds : evil deeds like killing, theft and adultery which arise from a restless body, lying, slander, abuse and vain conversation which arise from uncontrolled speech, covetousness, anger and scepticism which arise from an evil mind form the ten sins which leave their trail on the person's future. These are called the 'dasa doshas' in Buddhist theology.

Line 77. Avoiding the ten evil deeds is itself a good deed.

Lines 82-83. Consciousness is like the state of the mind which is not affected by the senses.

inert, active : doing nothing enjoying nothing, a mere witness.

Line 85. it : consciousness.

Lines 98-99. "Disease (Pini) is the result of the change of circumstances and conditions that affect the body. This may set in relation to his deeds also. In short, this is a bodily ailment. Old age (Muppu) indicates the wear and tear of the physical body due to constant• striving till death. Death (Sakkadu) results in that the body ultimately disappears as the sun sets."

_ N.Balusamy, Studies in Manimekalai, p.115.

Lines 104-118. These lines describe the inexorable Law of Causation.

Lines 134-137. Of the twelve Nidhanas or conditions of existence, Ignorance and Action form the first division, as they are the root cause of all the other evils of existence.

Lines 148-152. "Action and consciousness form the first link (sandhi). Sensation and desire, faultlessly understood, form the second link. From good and evil deeds (or existence) to proceed to births is the third link."

-- V. Kanakasabhai, The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago, p. 222.

Line 188. four Truths : Suffering, Cause of Suffering, Removal of Suffering, Way to Remove Suffering.

Lines 189-190. The Pancha Skandhas (branches or aggregates) are form (organised body), sensation, perception, discrimination and consciousness.

Line 191. conventions : modes of expression.

Lines 217-228. "There are four excellent faculties of the mind which perceive (i) Agreement, (ii) Non-agreement, (iii) Non-action and (iv) Action. To understand the connection of cause and effect in objects is to perceive agreement. To distinguish objects individually is to perceive non-agreement. To say that the mind cannot understand the primary cause which leads to effect in eternal and temporary objects is to perceive non-action. To say that the germ of rice springs out of the rice seed is perception of action."

-- V.Kanakasabhai, The Tamils Eighteen Hundred Years Ago, p. 224.

Line 228. uses : benefits accruing from the above knowledge.

Line 257. maitri bhavana, karuna bhavana and mudita bhavana.

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